

PUNCTUATION  
AS A MEANS OF  
EXPRESSION

A. E. LOVELL, M.A.







PUNCTUATION AS A MEANS  
OF EXPRESSION

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# PUNCTUATION

AS A MEANS  
OF EXPRESSION

ITS THEORY AND PRACTICE

BY

A. E. LOVELL, M.A.



LONDON

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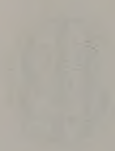
1926

PUNCTATION

AS A MEANS  
OF IMPROVING

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE

OF THE ART



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## EXPLANATORY

THE putting-in of stops is the sort of business that everybody is supposed to do pretty well, but nobody is quite sure of. I have thought it possible to set the whole thing upon a rational basis, expounding a theory and formulating consequent canons of procedure which may make practice in punctuation easy and certain.

This booklet is for students in training for the teaching profession, for pupil teachers, and for secondary or high-school scholars. This is perhaps a mixed multitude—individually over-divergent in age and attainment. But, after all, the same difficulty—though in a more manageable form—is met and faced by every class-teacher in the kingdom; and I have thought it best to make my exposition fairly complete, even at the cost of a treatment which in part may be somewhat involved for one section of my audience and in part may be somewhat simple for another. The easier and simpler portions have their intimate bearing upon the whole question, while the more difficult and complex are not, I think, beyond the capacity of an intelligent boy or girl at Secondary School or Centre.

I would like to think, too, that even so small a book may have its interest for teachers of an older growth.

A. E. L.



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# PUNCTUATION

## ITS THEORY AND PRACTICE

### CHAPTER I

#### THOUGHT-EXPRESSION

**PUNCTUATION** is a **Means of Expression** ; a subsidiary means it is true, and covering no very wide field ; not ranking with speech or drawing—or even gesture ; but yet enabling human kind to voice what otherwise would be silent, first by inflection and pause in utterance and later by a system of written signs. It is not quite so simple a means either as may be hastily imagined. Its refinements come with civilization and the advancement of learning. It is an easy thing to put into what we are pleased to call our composition a few marks familiarly known as “**stops**,” but it is not an easy thing to do it well. The philosophy and theory of this putting-in of stops is but ill understood, and it is too readily thought to be a question of a few rules—and simple at that. A mistake.

In order to work out a theory of punctuation, we had better go back to the beginning of things : **writing** will come before stops, **speech** before writing, and **thoughts** before speech. Let us take thoughts first.

As to their nature and origin, our great teachers are not

agreed. Fortunately this does not much matter. But they are all agreed that with the formation of thoughts comes

**Thoughts and their Expression.** urgent desire for their expression. This is one potent reason why it is not good for man to live alone. He would be bound to fret and worry in efforts to give expression to his imaginings, and, as Froebel puts it, "to make the inner, outer." If any advance in speech were possible, he would get into the unlovely habit of talking to himself.

For man positively must, as far as in him lies, materialize his thoughts. At what stage in his development language comes is a hard question. It is equally hard to determine how far he can get along without it; but before articulate speech he will make early efforts in babblings and noise. He will try his powers and justify his existence. But he can do this apart from speech: there is something earlier yet. A divine instinct of curiosity will lead him to inquire and explore: hand and ear and eye will be busy; and a divine instinct urging him towards expression will make him use the same hand and ear and eye in paying back to the external world in rich measure what he has received—and with usury. He will draw—rudely enough, but with increasing understanding and skill. He will shape rough copies of bird and beast, of shell and tree; at a later stage indeed of something unknown in earth or sky, due to his own "spirit of imagination." He is getting on.

But it is companionship and the sympathy of another that will make him bring forth of his best. His own impulses

**The Stimulus of Companionship.** towards the real and the actual—something to see and touch—are stimulated, while his knowledge and capacities are of daily growth. Mind whets mind, and fresh problems are set for his solution by the spontaneous life and movement of society. There is no time of his existence



when it does not do him good to have "something craggy to break his mind upon"; and living with his fellow-men he gets it. And what is a difficulty and a complexity at one grade is a facility and a triviality at another. So greatly does he advance.

Progress means fresh progress. The accomplishment of one task sets another. It is only by rising to one eminence of knowledge that he can see another that towers beyond:

**Progress in Expression—power.**

Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise.

The impulse to expression is the birthright of every man. But brilliant and exceptional success may make an artist: an artist in stone, in clay, in pigment, in a hundred things given for his blessing; his soul speaking in all that he does. The highest art is given to few only; its elemental graciousness and beauty and enjoyment are the possession of all—in varying measure, but still in a common benediction. And in nothing is this seen so well as in **Language—the Art of vocal expression.**

"Language was given to man to conceal his thoughts," said the cynical diplomatist. But from the beginning it was

**Thought-Communication.** not so; nor, I trust, is it generally the case now: certainly not amongst the young. It is the common vehicle of communication between man and man and the badge of his mentality.

**(a) Speech.** And to be of best value it must express the thing that is; speech is not at its highest, either as instrument or as art, in Ananias and Sapphira.

And now we touch upon the most perfect forms of the interchange of thoughts. The very extremity of delicate perception possessed by the human ear is hardly appreciated by the young student: the refinements of inflection, of accent and emphasis; the manifold combinations and permutations of vocalization; teeth and lips, nose and throat, tongue and

palate, all tell of man's rationality amongst the beasts of the field and his "splendid isolation."

But isolation from his inferiors only, for this isolation is a mark of his superiority. He is now vocal for his own good,

with infinite possibilities of progress. Not

Oral        that progress is always a good thing : the swine

Punctuation. of Gadara in their madness made extraordinary

progress. But with speech man has some-

thing of the god in him, and is little lower than the

angels. Sympathy is his ; companionship and co-operation

in labour are at his call ; unity of purpose and a

common aim are possible. He exchanges thoughts with his

fellows not only by the utterances which we call syllables

and words, but by appropriate inflections, pauses, emphasis-

variations, and even gestures. This is oral punctuation :

and oral punctuation is never taught, or rather is never

taught under that name. Yet every careful teacher of

infants who trains little ones to raise and drop the voice in

speech, to make pauses, to give time for the reply of another

or to become animated in dialogue, is giving valuable

instruction in the **Art of Oral Punctuation.**

An Art is not only a means for the expression of what cannot

be so well expressed in any other way ; it is also economical

of time and labour. And this is particularly noticeable in

the Art of Oral Punctuation. It would take a good deal of

explanation to reveal to a hearer those shades of meaning

which are immediately apprehended by way of tone and pause.

A note in the voice will show abruptly and without chance of

error the sarcastic intent of a statement which would other-

wise be accepted as an utterance of sober fact. "This is

a mighty fine thing, sir," says a Dr. Johnson over and over

again in an ever-recurring colloquialism ; but he will use

the same words to give voice to his serious admiration for a

noble picture or his contempt for a weak argument : a delicate

inflection will make all the difference and give the right interpretation. The world rolls on for us much more comfortably through this oral punctuation of ours.

Man has made great strides forward when he is able to suggest to his absent friend what otherwise he would have to communicate by word of mouth. In essence

(b) **Written Language.** the thing is simple enough. What he wants is a system of signs which shall represent sounds, and which shall be so understood and accepted by others. Not a very simple thing in practice however, but rather a huge and elaborate complexity. This is where the trouble comes: it is difficult enough to get a few men to agree upon a few things; to get many men to agree upon many things is a Herculean labour, and often best left to bitter experience and the lapse of time. The history of language in its written forms would show a growth or development, slow, irregular and uncertain, yet with definite steps towards law and order and an accepted convention; but no formal meetings for discussion and final decision, and no promulgation of edict or regulation. Least of all shall we find any matured invention or discovery of a system—though earliest beginnings are associated with one Cadmus: he is said to have invented letters. “’Spect I growed,” says Topsy, in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. So with our system of writing. A thing like this does not spring forth like Pallas from the brain of Jove, full-grown and full-equipped.

**Written language** is the endeavour to express that which is spoken. It can only do so in some respects haltingly and lamely: what success it has is proportionate

**Written Punctuation.** to the degree of accuracy with which it reveals the oral speech of human kind, and acts as its substitute. In spite of irregularities and anomalies, the written forms of an advanced civilization do pretty

faithfully interpret the ideas it is intended to convey to others ; and they have one huge advantage which the spoken forms have not : they have something of eternity about them, and are relatively permanent. And the written language does not go far without employing a system of signs to represent all—or as many as possible—of those refinements of speech which are involved in the art of the orator. It cannot express all. But it can express much ; and our “ stops ” will indicate the pause, the question, the expression of some form of emotion, the rising or falling inflection, with more or less of success. It cannot do everything that vocal pause and inflection can ; still less can it restore or suggest the expressive play of countenance, or a gesture which is vocal. But it can do some things that oral punctuation cannot do, or at least cannot do as well ; it can assist the setting forth of the syntax of speech in clear and striking signs, and so control the understanding. And this, as Touchstone in *As You Like It* would say, is “ Good, very good, very excellent good.”

And now it will be seen how **Punctuation** is the latest development in the art of verbal expression. I do not mean that there were no “ stops ” in early stages of written forms : the contrary is the case. But a complete and complex scheme of written signs which shall express the refinements of spoken language, and tell something of the very manner and speech-tone of him that speaks, is the coping-stone of a structure whose foundations were laid long before the babblements of Babel.

**The Keynote:**      **A MEANS OF EXPRESSION :** this then is the  
**A Means of**      keynote of this little book ; and expression,  
**Expression.**      too, of the individual mind—of a man’s own  
                                  and not another’s.

## CHAPTER II

### TRAFFIC IN THOUGHTS : A DEVELOPMENT AND A CONVENTION

WE have seen that **Punctuation is a means of communication** as well as a means of expression ; or rather, it is a means of expression for the particular purpose of communication : our ideas must be shared ; they demand an audience. Writing itself—and therefore Punctuation—would scarcely have arisen for a man's individual delight ; it is a **social instrument**. Those introspective people who keep diaries and decently embalm their confessions in cloth and leather no doubt do apparently write for themselves alone. But perhaps this is not quite so ; they may be somewhat self-conscious persons who have a lively imagination in the midst of their communings, and although they do not write for their friends and neighbours they may write for posterity. The best of them do at any rate, and the world is glad : no one would willingly miss such delightful diaries as Pepys' and Evelyn's. The young student should read both : Pepys' first, and then Evelyn's. But this by the way.

It is clear that for the purpose of communicating with others there must be **agreement as to the meaning of signs.**

<p><b>An Agreement Necessary.</b> <b>The unknown is not understood.</b></p>	<p>A spoken language is a body of vocal signs agreed upon as expressive of known things signified ; communication being less and less effective as these signs are less and less familiar.</p> <p>The Cockney is not always well understood in the villages of Yorkshire ; the Frenchman knowing no word of English is a lonely man in London.</p>
---	--

Asks Cassius in *Julius Cæsar*,

Did Cicero say anything ?

Casca. Ay, he spoke Greek.

Cassius. To what effect ?

Casca. Nay, an I tell you that I'll ne'er look you i' the face again : but those that understood him smiled at one another, and shook their heads ; but, for mine own part, it was Greek to me.

It matters not what signs are employed, so long as they are accepted of all—a clan, a nation or a race in enlarging usefulness. And what is true of speech spoken is true of language written, and must be true also of a system of punctuation which shall have social value.

The particular signs chosen are a thing of secondary importance ; but they must be understood : which will mean that something of the nature of agreement will be necessary. The reason, as Macaulay would **Development.** have said, is obvious. Agreement is involved in the very idea of **a system** in which a multitude can take part and in which every one can feel equally at home. We have seen that **such a system has not been imposed from without or from above, but has been evolved from within, and has been generally accepted.** The process is clear enough : a perpetual give-and-take in the matter of speech-forms.



a tentative and partial adoption of much that will pass out of use as well as of much that will stay, a gradual working towards a crisis when the hour and the man shall come and a great maker of dictionaries and judge of words do something to fix the chief language-forms—all this and more ; but no formal referendum to a populace. Still less to a monarch ; for in nothing is the power of the people better seen than in a language. They say the final word and there is no appeal. Neither is there any fuss nor any writing down of their decisions. But habit and custom have more binding force than law itself, and there is agreement that this and that sign shall represent this and that sound. That there is confusion and irregularity in this accepted body of written signs is of course notorious. Grammar-book and spelling-book and book of reading-method all tell the same tale. But we must make the best of it. It comes of leaving things to chance. Our spelling and writing-forms have grown up and staggered along haphazard : no doubt it was important to everybody that the forms should be sensible in themselves and easily mastered, but what is everybody's business is nobody's business ; and we should be thankful that they are no worse. If our present-day legislators had the work to do, it would be better done. They would begin with the manufacture of a far neater and more intelligible alphabet. Even that probably would be touched with the colour of party politics : the Tory A B C would be different from the Whig, and it would soon become a matter of Whig conscience to amend it. The *Infant's Delight*, Part I, might faintly indicate the theory of Church and State ; letters might vary in value with the social standing of the people's representatives : Mr. Dash, voicing the views of the schoolmaster, uses the aspirate with grace and feeling ; Mr. Blank, not voicing the views of the schoolmaster, finds it a nuisance and feels he would get on better without it—and does. And what he can do others can do too. There

may come a time when it will be bad form and a gross affectation to use an aspirate in the House of Commons—in its right place; and so even an alphabet may reflect the point of view of its compilers. Yet any concrete result of collective consideration and debate would be superior to the wretched thing we have to spell with now. Seeing how bad it is might very well be the first step towards making it better. But it is too deeply rooted in our social system to be lightly torn up. Enthusiasts have found it a pretty tough undertaking to bring into common use that very ingenious and excellent scheme, the Metric System of Weights and Measures; only because of the extreme difficulty of displacing anything that enters so intimately into our daily life as our old-fashioned pounds and ounces, yards and feet. And the Alphabet is a much bigger thing: stronger than the Monarchy—a good deal stronger than the Established Church. It will be some time before the Reform of the Alphabet is an urgent and attractive platform-cry to lure or compel the voter. Let us be content.

The fact that the various forms agreed upon are irregular and inconsistent is unfortunate. It enlarges the sorrows of childhood and adds to the labours of men.

**A Convention** But it may show that the convention has been  
**and a** reached by lapse of time and without taking  
**System.** thought for the morrow. And the principle still holds good: agreement is necessary if thoughts are to be communicated.

The particular body of signs adopted is of small moment. Ultimately it would appear to be some sort of case of survival of the fittest. It would be a convenience at the time of first invention and first learning if signs were not wholly arbitrary; if they might of themselves be significant of what they represent. But provided that our memory be not over-burdened, it is after all, as Mr. Toots says in *Dombey and Son*, of

no consequence. This sort of system of arbitrary signs—signs which might have been something else without loss of value, by reason of this want of natural or logical relation with the things typified—we call conventional. **Our marks of punctuation are conventional**, and can be nothing else. A simple example and illustration may be given : our semicolon was the sign of question of the Greeks. And the Greeks knew what they were about in literary matters. After all a simple mark on wax or papyrus or parchment cannot in itself be significant of sound or vocal inflection. But simplicity is essential ; and our scheme of punctuation is simple.

And there is another great merit in this our punctuation-system : it is in the main consistent and regular ; far more so than perhaps might have been anticipated. Yet quite naturally so : it is of later origin, when men had learnt to know a little more exactly what they wanted, and were more articulate. Our “ stops ” bear the mark of civilization and culture. Then again the work they have to do is not excessive, though delicate and important ; and it has been found possible to define the duties of each fairly accurately. It has not been found possible to make every one of them mind his own business, and mind it absolutely ; they tread upon one another’s toes to some extent, but even in that direction something has been done by way of improvement.

It will be seen then that our punctuation-marks or stops take their part in the communication of thoughts because it has been agreed that they shall be accepted and understood as of definite import, and that—broadly speaking—what they mean in one place they shall mean in another : in brief, they can be depended upon ; to use Coleridge’s word, **they are reliable**. As any of them fall short of these conditions they fall short also of perfect utility.

And it is on this account that **we are able to formulate**

rules, for the regularities upon which they hang are absolutely necessary. A rule is the expression of a regularity,

**Regularities  
and Rules.**

and prescribes both what to aim at and how to reach it. Elsewhere I put forward rules for the guidance of the young student in the use of his stops ; not many, however, yet with many cautions : and generally under another name. But at this stage he should note that regularities are absolutely essential for anything which shall have a social value, that the higher kinds of literary expression are dependent in part upon regularities in punctuation, that these regularities have grown up and are not so much consciously made as found, and that **rules shall guide but not control us. They are capital servants but bad masters ;** which, to speak the speech of Launcelot Gobbo, shall be specified in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### SELF-EXPRESSION

Man, then, has to express himself—and to others. He is a talking and writing animal, and must say things or burst.

**For Self's Sake and for Others' Sake.** This is acknowledged frankly in the sweet feminine: says Rosalind in *As You Like It*, "Do you not know I am a woman? When I think I must speak." Surely we all prattle

by reflex action. But it takes two to make a conversation as much as it takes two to make a quarrel. And in the communication of A's thoughts to B and the reciprocal communication of B's thoughts to A there will not only be a common and understandable system of signs, but an individual speech-tone as much as there is an individual face and figure. A is A and B is B, not mere human units each undifferentiated from the other; they are not alike as two sixpences from the same mint or as the proverbial two peas. To use a term beloved of Hegel and the German Emperor, each is a **personality**. And this personality will display itself in speech and in writing as well as in other functioning—and in punctuation. And this consideration must be borne in mind when it comes to a question of the making of rules: in itself, the personal and individual aspect runs counter to rules.

Aristotle maintained more than two thousand years ago that in the field of morals right conduct consisted in the true apprehension and practice of the mean between extremes. Wrong was deviation therefrom, and became increasingly wrong as it touched upon the extreme. Thus *extravagance* was a missing of the mark equally with its hateful opposite, *penuriousness* : the good man was seen in a happy *generosity*. *Temperance* was at middle distance between *self-indulgence* and *asceticism*. I use this merely as an illustration. It is pretty clear that in our social interchange of ideas there is a duality of aspect and interest which must be regarded, and extreme approach to either pole must be avoided ; we must not lean too far from the middle line in any disturbing partiality. We cannot be so exact as Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* was bidden to be. We cannot come to such accuracy as

. . . the division of the twentieth part

Of one poor scruple,

and our scale will generally turn more than

. . . in the estimation of a hair.

But we must do what we can ; remembering that a weak insistence upon uniformity and a servile obedience to rules is the fault in literature which in mind and brain makes a man a hewer of wood and drawer of water for everlasting ; while the over-bold attempt at independence and originality possibly becomes an offensive eccentricity, and in literature is darkness and misunderstanding. We will hold full authority then over all rules, or we may not call our literary soul our own : but they cannot be ignored or used amiss. **Individual freedom for brilliance and originality—and incoherence ; common forms and regularities for lucidity—and mediocrity.** The very genius, then, cannot be absolutely independent ; he is bound by rules as well as another : he is by no means



above them or apart from them as is often untruly said. But he asserts his mastership over them and takes care that they do not impede his progress: they shall only guide him on the lines of least resistance. **And in punctuation as in all else.**

I do not wish to exaggerate. We must not think of punctuation as of one of the mighty occupations of the human intellect: we can hardly say that a great man is revealed in his method of stops. But in

### **Individuality.**

#### **(a) Personal**

#### **Idiosyncrasy.**



small things as in large: **there is room for personality**; and at this early stage I am anxious that the student shall see that there is less of the absolutely correct and incorrect, of right way and wrong way, than he may fancy. There is opportunity for personal taste: for that individuality which escapes analysis and concerning which there can be no profitable dispute. Add to this that there will be variations in practice according

#### **(b) Personal Purpose.**

to the meaning and intention of the writer, and it results that the same passage may be pointed in different ways without any of them being wrong. As we grow in power we may be indulged and must have a little freedom: it is only in the standards of the Elementary School that the stops are certainly right or wrong.

#### **By way of illustration.**

Let me illustrate. Here is something from Tennyson with his own punctuation:

Come not, when I am dead,   
 To drop thy foolish tears upon my grave,  
 To trample round my fallen head,  
 And vex the unhappy dust thou wouldst not save.  
 There let the wind sweep and the plover cry;  
 But thou, go by. 

Child, if it were thine error or thy crime  
 I care no longer, being all unblest:  
 Wed whom thou wilt, but I am sick of Time,  
 And I desire to rest.  
 Pass on, weak heart, and leave me where I lie:  
 Go by, go by.

I gave it in blank to a friend ; a Balliol man, of fine natural gifts and high culture. This is what he made of it :—

Come not, when I am dead,  
 To drop thy foolish tears upon my grave ;  
 To trample round my fallen head  
 And vex the unhappy dust thou wouldst not save.  
 There let the wind sweep and the plover cry ;  
 But thou go by.

Child, if it were thine error or thy crime,  
 I care no longer being all unblest.  
 Wed whom thou wilt, but I am sick of Time  
 And I desire to rest.  
 Pass on weak heart and leave me where I lie.  
 Go by ; go by.

His individuality asserts itself ; or not knowing the inner thought of the poet except as reflected in the verse his punctuation is naturally slightly different. An intelligent boy of seventeen did it this way :—

Come not, when I am dead,  
 To drop thy foolish tears upon my grave ;  
 To trample round my fallen head,  
 And vex the unhappy dust thou wouldst not save.  
 There, let the wind sweep and the plover cry.  
 But thou ! go by !

Child ! if it were thine error or thy crime,  
 I care no longer being all unblest,  
 Wed whom thou wilt, but I am sick of Time ;  
 And I desire to rest.  
 Pass on, weak heart, and leave me where I lie.  
 Go by ! go by !

The differences are curious, but our contention is enforced : regularities there are, and individual choice. I wonder whether the impetuosity of youth is revealed in the several marks of emotion in the third example.

But the student may suspect that the poet's own punctuation is right, while other forms are deviations of the nature of error. This is not the true view ; except as a man is likely to express best the meaning of what he writes,

because he knows it best. Those, too, who make literature which, to adopt a fine phrase of Milton's, the world would

(c) Consequent Variations : not willingly let die, perhaps show a specially exact judgment in putting the final touches even to the last refinement of punctuation to those writings which are to any lover of letters, in the sweet language of the Greeks, a "possession for always." And here comes in strikingly enough a man's self. He has a style of his own, and his method of punctuation follows it and assists it. Here is a passage from Macaulay's *History of England* :—

After much deliberation, William determined to send Melville down to Edinburgh as Lord High Commissioner. Melville was not a great statesman : he was not a great orator : he

By way of illustration. did not look or move like the representative of royalty : his character was not of more than standard purity : and the standard of purity among Scottish senators was not high ; but he was by no means deficient in prudence or temper ; and he succeeded, on the whole, better than a man of much higher qualities might have done.

These sentences rather remind one of the pattering of shot in a shot-tower. The phrases are sharp and incisive, and so is the punctuation.

I turn to Charles Dickens. This is from *Bleak House* :—

"Mr. Bagnet," said my Guardian, "do you mean to let her go in that way?"

"Can't help it," he returned. "Made her way home once. From another quarter of the world. With the same grey cloak. And same umbrella. Whatever the old girl says, do. Do it! Whenever the old girl says, I'll do it. She does it."

"Then she is as honest and genuine as she looks," rejoined my Guardian, "and it is impossible to say more for her."

"She's Colour-Sergeant of the Nonpareil battalion," said Mr. Bagnet, looking at us over his shoulder as he went his way also. "And there's not such another. But I never own to it before her. Discipline must be maintained."

Clearly Dickens put in his stops oddly : from the plain person's standpoint, a youngster at school in one of the

lower forms would beat him easily. We cannot pass Charles Dickens, I think, except on the plea that he is expressing his own personality—and the speech-manner of Mr. Joseph Bagnet. Otherwise Charles Dickens must fail.

I gave both these passages to my friend of Balliol. He had no difficulty with Macaulay, but being without the guidance of points or capital letters, hit upon an alternative meaning and gave a different first sentence :—

After much deliberation William determined to send Melville down to Edinburgh. As Lord High Commissioner, Melville was not a great statesman ; he was not a great orator ; he did not look or move like the representative of royalty. His character was not of more than " standard " purity, and the standard of purity among Scottish senators was not high : but he was by no means deficient in prudence or temper, and he succeeded, on the whole, better than a man of much higher qualities might have done.

He then tackled Dickens ; and happily not recalling that genius's frailty in the matter of stops, and therefore not being himself misled, did very well indeed :—

" Mr. Bagnet," said my Guardian, " do you mean to let her go in that way ? "

" Can't help it ; " he returned, " made her way home once from another quarter of the world with the same grey cloak and same umbrella. Whatever the old girl says Do, do it. Whenever the old girl says I'll do it, she does it."

" Then she is as honest and genuine as she looks," rejoined my Guardian, " and it is impossible to say more for her."

" She's Colour-Sergeant of the Nonpareil battalion," said Mr. Bagnet, looking at us over his shoulder as he went his way also, " and there's not such another, but I never own to it before her. Discipline must be maintained."

And the curious and interesting result is that the distinctive character of each extract is lessened, and the distinguished authors speak more nearly the common language of all men.

Our aim and practice then in our own punctuation shall be to give free and appropriate play to our own  
 Our Ideal. personality, and at the same time to have regard  
 to those regularities of convention and custom  
 which shall enable others to understand and approve.

## CHAPTER IV

### LOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL MEANING :

#### SYNTAX AND RHETORIC

FOR purposes of grammar the little twopenny primers tell us that there are three persons ; the first, the second, and the third. Somebody speaks to somebody

**Three** about somebody. But this third somebody  
**Persons.** may be somebody or something or nobody or nothing. He is reduced to a mere subject of discourse, and may be described or defined in negative terms. Now the immediate function of the speaker is to make his meaning clear to the listener, whose immediate function in turn is to understand the meaning of the speaker. This is the theory : and it will serve our turn very well in Punctuation.

We have seen that the full meaning must be understood to involve those finer shades which come with feeling. Pause,

**The** inflection and emphasis will convey information  
**Intellectual** as well as words arranged in sentences. Intel-  
**and the** lect and feeling are both in question. Man's  
**Emotional** mentality will find expression in coherent  
**in Word-** thought and in consequent coherent language,  
**expression.** but his emotions will give colour to his sentences. These of themselves will lack much of the sympathetic appeal which speech touched with passion has

with all of us ; as a man's words—spoken or written—take on a purely intellectual tone they become more or less uninteresting. Many such a man unfortunately speaks from the pulpit ; which then suffers, as the ancient verger declared *his* pulpit did, from “dry rot.” This intellectuality of meaning may be spoken of as logical, its emotionalism as rhetorical. No doubt rhetoric is the art of the *rhetor*, and the *rhetor* or orator must be logical to be rightly effective : he should speak “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth” ; and at his best, possibly he does so. But his is expression by word of mouth and he must have the help of feeling-tone. He finds in practice too that he must depend for his finest successes in great measure upon deft dealing with the emotions of his hearers. I shall therefore use the terms *logical* and *rhetorical* to express the distinctively intellectual and emotional aspects of the sense of words, which the student will be asked to keep in mind and to which his attention will be directed again and again.

An illustration or two. A few sentences back I quoted the solemn obligation upon every witness in our courts of justice :

	he is to speak “the truth, the whole truth and
	nothing but the truth.” The logical meaning
By way of	is clear enough ; although it is equally clear
illustration.	that the true truth is not found in every witness,

who occasionally is as careless and flippant as Bacon thought Pontius Pilate to have been : “‘What is truth,’ said jesting Pilate, and would not wait for an answer.” But the words themselves, with any assistance which Punctuation can ordinarily render, do not give the full content of meaning which is too forcibly expressed by “the truth, the *whole* truth and nothing *but* the truth,” but which the speaker will suggest by slight and perhaps unconscious emphasis, and which almost any schoolboy who can read at all will put into his voice for the benefit of any hearer. This is rhetorical.



Everybody does a good deal of this sort of thing; and in reading aloud the trick comes up with every possibility of confusing the meaning of the original speaker

**Ambiguity** or writer. An old sexton of my early days **therefrom.** would read his share of the Psalms with reverence and much emphasis: "He sent darkness and it *was* dark," said the dear old man, now at rest, I think, where there is no darkness at all. Have we not all heard of the misreading of what the obedient sons of the rascally old prophet of Bethel did? "And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass: and they saddled *him*." No wonder that a close thinker like Jeremy Bentham would have as reader to himself one with voice expressionless and monotonous—an excellent gift for purposes of strict logic.

So careful too are lawyers, the most careful of human kind. These men, honourable as Brutus was, will not mislead.

An  
over-violent  
effort to  
avoid  
**Ambiguity.**

There is nothing very emotional in their deeds and documents; they are not concerned in them with variations of emphasis and inflection: but the logical meaning itself may be clouded, and this must not be. They will prevent misunderstanding, and therefore doubt even the simplest punctuation of their sentences. They do not limit their caution to the dangers of rhetorical misunderstanding, but will avoid the suggestiveness of those very aids to the logical grasp of another's meaning which common people find to assist them vastly. The comma is treacherous and the semicolon sly: truth is not found in "stops." This is the fashion of legal language:—

The Author shall indemnify the Publishers against all claims  
**By way of illustration: not to be imitated.** actions damages and costs on account of such Book constituting an infringement of the Copyright of any other Book or Work or containing anything libellous or scandalous.

And again :—

The Tenant agrees with the Landlord to pay the said rent on the days and in manner aforesaid to pay all existing and future taxes rates assessments and outgoings of every description for the time being payable in respect of the said Premises (except as aforesaid) to keep the inside of the said Premises in good and tenantable condition as regards paint and repair reasonable wear and tear excepted and without any alteration except such as the Landlord shall approve of.

Once more :—

I devise and bequeath all my real and personal Estate whatsoever and wheresoever and of whatever nature unto my Trustees their heirs executors administrators and assigns respectively Upon trust that they or the survivor of them or the executors—

and so on. But this is extreme and cannot be commended. Truly a very simple solution of the difficulty of “stops” : *Do not have any.* One is apt to suspect, however, that this simple frugality in punctuation has passed from its first intention, and what once was for enlightenment now tends to the darkening of counsel. Have we not all heard of the lawyer who wrote three hands : one for the public, open and plain ; one that only himself and clerk could read ; and one that nobody could read ? The jest has several variants, but this will do. And what bodes this sensitiveness of the lawyers to the ambiguities of punctuation ?

Marry, peace it bodes, and love, and quiet life.  
I think not : not nowadays.

We come to this then ; that it is not such a simple matter for a speaker to express his meaning beyond doubt or cavil, but that he will be more likely to do it better

**A Complex Problem.** in speech than in writing. To make up for the absence of pause and emphasis and voice-variation generally, a system of punctuation is at our disposal. But when we read, we still have difficulty ; our imagination is lively and, whether we like it or not, will have its say. We read into another's writing more than the words themselves convey. As far

as our system of stopping is common property, with an understood and accepted interpretation, we read into this other's meaning all that is conveyed by the stops. Individuality, however, has free play, and there is always room for a difference of understanding: the finer variants of meaning will gather still finer distinctions. The whole question becomes further complicated by the logical and

rhetorical functions of our punctuation-scheme;

**The Personal** and upon the rhetorical side the "personal

**Equation.** equation" so familiar and annoying to men

who carry on research in science will give on

occasion strikingly individual results. The rhetorical use of stops led our "intelligent boy of seventeen," who assisted us in our punctuation of Tennyson, somewhat astray. In his youthful energy and youthful outlook upon the universe he grew strong: Go by! go by! The quiet philosophy of the aged and world-worn woman, the poet interpreting, spoke differently: Go by, go by.

There must be a good deal of give and take in this business of logical and rhetorical expression. If the same stop-system is to have a double function, each phase in turn will have its own emphasis, varying with different subjects of discourse and with different individuals. We are now in a position to carry further forward our explanation of the rather startling punctuation of our extracts from Macaulay and Dickens. With both writers the rhetorical aspect has emphasis; it has place, so to speak, upon the wave-crest of their meaning. It would be better perhaps for the historian to adopt a calm serenity of statement, but Macaulay had a horror of being dull; he would rouse his audience and present vivid narrative-pictures: he must have plain downright hammer-strokes. The novelist has to reveal character; the jerks of Mr. Joseph Bagnet's speech, with his reflective pauses and confident shreds of testimony about his wife from which there could

be no appeal, are well shown by a scattering of full-stops as from a pepper-pot. Neither writer is ignorant. If he is in error, it is with *malice prepense*. He simply extracts the last ounce of rhetoric from his punctuation-method.

It follows then that in the examination of a great author, in order to find his secret and be great too, we must use effort to discover his idiosyncrasy and his purpose. All that he does is not for all conditions and circumstances. It follows further that in our own practice **we must have a distinct purpose in the use of every point, and show due regard to logical and rhetorical expression both.** Punctuation follows the sense, thus interpreted. We will have a meaning, and know it.

But we must know the **bed-rock values and functions of the various points accepted of all men.** No man is so great as to say, *I will have it so*, and use a comma **Stop-value** for a mark of question. And in the next place **and Stop-** we must have judgment in deciding upon the **function.** conflicting claims of logical and rhetorical expression ; we must be skilful in compromise, and have something of literary tact and taste : and this cannot come wholly with labour and observation.

I should like to illustrate somewhat further, and turn to common school practice for an example or two. In the Reading lesson we are training little people to the free and habitual rendering of another's meaning by reading aloud. In my own experience young teachers are very apt to go wrong here : probably from a desire to formulate rules, thinking rules more important than they are ; or misunderstanding their application. Doubtless too there is some defect in their appreciation of the never-ending contest between Logic and Rhetoric, which I have already threatened to mention again and again. Once hold that punctuation rigidly exhibits the build of the sentences and their syntactical

relations, and the charm of rhetorical expression goes by the board. But once hold that this same feeling-tone is the one thing needful, and intellectuality in utterance is lost. In either assumption every stop suggests a uniform voice-value which is not true. "Lift your voice at the comma," says the teacher. Not at all; not necessarily: to use a common colloquialism, it depends. "Raise the voice at the question-mark," says the teacher. Again no: it depends. "Pause longer at the semi-colon than at the comma." Not certainly: it depends. Logical and rhetorical intention may forbid it. And so with the Composition lesson, when youngsters are so far forward as to be taught the niceties of stops. "There are two clauses in this long sentence; you should separate them by a comma." Not at all. "Make a semicolon." Not at all. "A colon." No. Again, it depends.

Rhetoric and Logic, each will have his say: great principles are at stake. All will depend upon a correct adjustment of their conflicting demands. A rigid system of rules will spoil everything. So will having no rules at all.

## CHAPTER V

### PUNCTUATION IN ITS MEANING AND SCOPE : A PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

It will have seemed pretty plain already that in order to get thus far with my subject I have been making **certain assumptions**. This is absolutely necessary for anyone

Some that will teach ; but he must be prepared to **Assumptions**. state what his assumptions are. Sometimes there is a general understanding and no explanation is required : thus in the alphabet-sheet for the nursery or infants' school, it must be taken for granted that there is some power of observation and attention common to all who will learn or common to the class taught ; and that what mother, nurse or teacher sees, tiny John and Mary see too. In reading-books just above that stage of advancement, a knowledge of the alphabet is assumed, but of other literary experience—nothing. A knowledge of the meaning of written or printed signs is assumed at other stages ; and so on. In this business of Punctuation, I have so far implied that the student is familiar with the usual stops and their names, and has been accustomed to use them freely with or without rational certainty. But I fancy it will have been suspected already that I have in mind something more than the limitations usually associated with Punctuation. And this is true.



But let us see first what some respectable writer of grammar has to say. I know of no better book of its grade than Mr. Mason's; in several important respects I know of none so good. Where others have given definitions as excellent they have generally been indebted to him; where their accuracy of literary analysis has been as admirable they have usually taken his point of view and adopted his forms. When the book first appeared, it struck a distinct note of power and originality. With him grammar took on something of the nature of an exact science. It is now, alas, old; and reminds us unpleasantly of the passing of time. I think it was never popular, perhaps because it was too good, perhaps because it was too dry: it lacked all literary charm, and did not even help the student by an attractive letterpress. It had to be bought, though; and because of its accuracy I turn to Mr. Mason's book now. This is what he says at the beginning of his chapter on Punctuation:—

In speaking, the words of a sentence, especially if it be a complex one, are not uttered consecutively without any break. Certain pauses are made to mark more clearly the way in which the words of the sentence are grouped together.

In writing, these pauses are represented by marks called *stops or points*. *Punctuation* (derived from the Latin *punctum*, a *point*) means "the right mode of putting in points or stops."

His Definition.

The stops made use of are—1. The Comma (,),  
His Stops. 2. The Semicolon (;). 3. The Colon (:). 4. The Full Stop or Period (.).

He adds in a note that

These words (properly speaking) are names not of the *stops*, but of the portions of sentences which they mark off. *Comma* means a *clause*; *Colon*, a *limb* or *member* of a sentence; *Semicolon*, a half *Colon*; *Period*, a complete sentence.

It would appear then that there are four *points* or *stops* only. But evidently we must go further than this. In the enumeration of the stops, Mr. Mason himself, in his mode of indicating them graphically, uses what he speaks of later as *the parenthesis*



and what he only casually mentions afterwards as *the dash* ; while he says towards the end of his chapter, “ besides the stops, some other signs are employed in writing.” He goes on then to name *a note of interrogation*, as well as *the note of admiration or exclamation* and *double or single inverted commas*. All these, then, whether technically *stops* or not, we must understand as covered by our use of the term Punctuation.

Let us see what *The Imperial Dictionary of the English Language* tells us. It is described on the title-page as *A Complete Lexicon, literary, scientific and technical* ; and is by John Ogilvie, LL.D.

**The Imperial  
Dictionary's  
Definition.**

*Punctuation* . . . The act or art of punctuating or pointing a writing or discourse; the act or art of marking with points the division of a discourse into sentences and clauses or members of a sentence. Punctuation is performed by four points : the period (.), the colon (:), the semicolon (;), and the comma (,). Besides these may be enumerated the note of interrogation (?) or inquiry, of exclamation (!), expressing admiration, astonishment, or any considerable emotion. Our present system of punctuation came very gradually into use after the invention of printing.

It seems then that punctuation is a special art of using special marks called *points*, and that these points are four.

Some Observations.  
(a) Further Signs or Stops.

It follows that punctuation is the art of using these four points ; and that the use of other marks, not apparently being *points*, is not punctuation. This is perilously near an absurdity, and at any rate is not of sufficient scope to be of much service. Keep to the root-definition as strictly as they may, even Dr. Ogilvie and Mr. Mason both see that **some extra points must be recognized**.

But a mark may be regarded negatively. When is a stop not a stop ? When it isn't there. But a stop-effect may be indicated with no stop at all. This is not a paradox : I would not be as absurd as *Mr. Punch's* Irish sergeant : “ Those

of ye that are here, say 'prisint,' and those of ye that aren't here, say 'absint.' " But one of these very points of ours, the comma, has been used in time past for several duties ; and one was to mark the separation of words now spaced apart. This **space** then is significant of just the very thing that the comma formerly expressed. A new paragraph is with us indicated by a **new line** ; the change of line at the end of a period is significant of a change of topic, more or less connected with the topic of the precedent paragraph. The **capital letter** is used as well ; and at the beginning of a period also. But the dignity of the capital letter gives no further information ; yet it strikes the eye readily ; and we have got used to it and think it pretty. I suggest that our discussion should include such signs as these ; where there is no actual *point*, but a trick of arrangement or of type.

The fact is, we shall have to take up this question historically. Something was done to assist word-expression before points were ; while it is plain enough that *point-*

(b) **Historical** *ing* or *punctuation* had reference primarily to **Suggestions.** the sentence, and the sentence only : which

was closed by the period, and variously divided by the comma, colon and semicolon. Yet with enlargement of function since, it by no means follows that our term shall be changed, but only that with added responsibilities it shall have an extended meaning. Archbishop Trench, in his *Study of Words* gives many instances of the alteration of the meaning of a word from its first and simple connotation. *Calculation* no longer insists on pebbles. A man's *signature* is not the sign or mark it was in days when people could not write. We *expend* money without weighing it out, and in making *estimates* we do not need brass. Why should *punctuation* require the particular series of points associated with it, or be limited to these or any others of a time or fashion ? I beg leave to use the term in a wider sense.

## CHAPTER VI

### PUNCTUATION IN ITS MEANING AND SCOPE : AN HISTORICAL INQUIRY—WITH CONSEQUENT DEFINITION AND POSTULATES

LET us look further into this and see if we cannot get to some definite conclusion. A little History is recommended in our day as a sovereign corrective for a good deal **Appeal to** of the political and social or socialistic twaddle **the Past.** that troubles our patient generation : perhaps **a little History may help us here.**

We have just seen that it is a very common thing for words to change their signification in order to meet the convenience of the public ; a further interesting set of examples Mr. Mason's note has already afforded : the period, colon, semicolon and comma were all originally not stops but the things stopped. **We have now to trace something of the story of stops,** so that we may reach a decision as to what shall be meant by Punctuation.

The story of stops must begin from the time when there were none. The definition quoted from the "Imperial Dictionary" declares that "our present system of punctuation came very gradually into use after the invention of printing." But men could not wait for the invention of printing before setting down their own and others'

thoughts on papyrus or vellum, and the necessity of significant marks besides the letters themselves grew slowly

**Beginnings** urgent: this for clearness' sake, if for nothing  
**in** else. Yet it is extraordinary how little was  
**Manuscripts.** done. Let us go to the *Encyclopædia*  
*Britannica* for information: the article  
 on *Palæography* was written by Dr. Thompson, the  
 principal librarian at the British Museum, and we may be  
 sure that what he says may be depended on.

In almost all the earlier writings, two points quickly seize  
 upon our attention:

**Letters of** (a) The letters were all of the same general  
**One Kind.** size; there were *no capitals*.\*

**No Stops.** (b) The writing was continuous; there were  
*no stops*.

This could not possibly last for ever. Yet

In the early vellum MSS. there is no such separation; and unless  
 there is a pause in the sense, at which a small space may be left,  
 the line of letters has no break whatever. In  
**Significant** Greek MSS., indeed, a system of distinct separation  
**Spacings.** of words was never thoroughly worked out, even as  
 late as the 15th century.

And yet Caxton opened his printing-press at Westminster  
 before the close of this very century. But we find that

In early Irish and English MSS., however, it may be observed  
 that separation is more consistently followed. In MSS. of the  
 9th and 10th centuries the long words are separated, but short  
 prepositions and conjunctions are joined to the next following word.  
 It was not until the 11th century that these smaller words were  
 finally detached and stood apart.

This is somewhat better. But it seems odd that a simple  
 improvement such as this separation of words should be  
 delayed for hundreds of years. But hear Dr. Thompson:

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\* This requires qualification—or at least explanation. Different  
 early MSS. are in large character (uncial) or small (minuscule), and  
 show, as between one another, variations of letter-forms. A more  
 exact statement is that in any given MS., "at first there was no enlarge-  
 ment whatever of letters in any part of the text." This on the authority  
 of Dr. Thompson.

From the use of continuous writing naturally arose in the first place the necessity for the breaking up of the text into paragraphs and sentences, and afterwards the introduction of marks of punctuation.

### In certain prose works

A pause in the sense (unless it occurs at the end of a line) is indicated by a short blank space being left in the line and by a horizontal stroke being drawn under the first letter of the line in which the pause occurs. In a few instances, in the space left to mark the pause a full point or slight oblique stroke is added high in the line. As large letters were unknown, this system of dividing the paragraphs was calculated to sacrifice the least amount of space, as the rest of the line, after the pause, was utilized for the beginning of the next paragraph. In the early vellum MSS. the same plan is followed, with the more general use of the full-point, which is placed on a level with either the top or the middle of the letters ; and the marginal dividing signs are of different patterns.

But by-and-by **large letters** appear, and are intended to signify new paragraphs. But these large letters, hand-written, take up space.

Had they been invariably placed at the beginning of their respective paragraphs, the latter must of necessity have each begun a new line, unless the lines had been wide enough apart to leave room for the insertion of the large letters. This latter arrangement would, however, have entailed considerable loss of space ; and the device was accordingly invented, in cases where the paragraph began in the middle of a line, to place the large letter as the first letter of the next line, even though it might there occur in the middle of a word, and, as it was placed in the margin, it did not affect the normal space between the lines. It need hardly be said that, if the paragraph commenced at the beginning of a line, the large letter took its natural place as the initial. The use of these large or initial letters led to the abolition of the paragraph marks.

We see how these signs come and go, and the convention of one day is no longer the convention of another. We see too how great a work it is to build an enduring structure, even in the simplicities of Punctuation.

This practice of continuous writing was a fruitful source of ambiguity : but skins and parchment were scarce and dear, and lines must be put close together and spaces filled. A writer would see the importance of getting as many words as he could upon one page. It is sad to think that petty financial

questions troubled education in the days of our forefathers as in ours; but these same financial considerations seem to have led many a copyist into sundry methods of assisting the reader: an apostrophe was often inserted above the line between two words, as a dividing mark; something resembling an accent or short horizontal stroke was employed to indicate words consisting of a single letter.

In the earliest surviving Latin volumes there was no punctuation by the first hand, but in the later uncial MSS.\* the full-point, in various positions, was introduced—being placed on a level with either the bottom, middle, or top of the letters, the two latter positions being the most common. In minuscule MSS.\* the full-point, on the line or high, was first used; then the comma and semicolon, and the inverted semicolon (:), whose power was rather stronger than that of the comma. In Irish and early English MSS. the common mark of punctuation was the full-point. As a final stop one or more points with a comma . . . were frequently used.

Meanwhile as another outcome of the practice of continuous writing there had arisen a device of arranging texts in separate lines or blocks according to the sense: sense as understood by the copyist whose opinions were sometimes peculiar. These lines or sets of lines or, as we may call them, sense-units, are called *stichoi* in Greek or *versus* in Latin: clearly the origin of our *paragraphs* in prose and *verses* in poetry. “The art or act,” as Dr. Ogilvie would say, of measuring out and dividing writing into *stichoi* is *stichometry*. It had a plain business-like origin.

It was the custom of the Greeks and Romans to estimate the length of their literary works by lines. In poetical works the number of verses was computed; in prose works a standard line had to be taken, for no two scribes would naturally write lines of the same length. This standard was a medium Homeric line, and it appears to have consisted, on an average, of 34 to 38 letters, or 15 to 16 syllables.

A work consisted of so many *stichoi*, and the several MSS.

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\* See footnote, p. 39.



had recorded at the end the number of *stichoi* of which they were composed.

The use of such a stichometrical arrangement was in the first place for literary reference.

Clearly the average line or *stichos* would be of considerable assistance : such and such a passage was the first, ninth, fiftieth or *n*th *stichos*.

But the system was also of practical use in calculating the pay of the scribes and in arranging the market value of a MS. When once a standard copy of a work had been written in the normal lines, the scribes of all subsequent copies had only to record the number of *stichoi* without keeping to the prototype.

The work had so many *stichoi* no matter what such and such a scribe made of it. The *stichos* then was not only the unit of reference but the unit of literary piece-work. Surely The Preacher was right : " There is no new thing under the sun." The humbler journalist of to-day shall count his earnings by the *stichos*. The ribald call him a *penny-a-liner*.

Thus far in our inquiry we have not reached a system or an accepted convention ; there have been only fitful struggles towards something permanent. Better things, however, were at hand. The invention of printing was the sudden and brilliant dawn of a new day. With other matters literary, punctuation developed, and became more regular and exact. I consult another Encyclopædia, the *Popular*, merely pausing to remark how ignorant one feels before referring to encyclopædias, and how learned one feels afterwards. Having in mind the sundry signs in use before printing times, the writer of an article on Punctuation says :—

But as no particular rules were followed in the use of these signs, punctuation was exceedingly uncertain until the end of the fifteenth century, when the learned Venetian printers, the Manutii, increased the number of the signs, and established some fixed rules for their application. These were so generally adopted that we may consider them as the inventors of the present method of punctuation ; and although modern grammarians have introduced some improvements,



nothing but some particular rules have been added since that time. The principal points used in English composition are the *comma* (,), *semicolon* (;), *colon* (:), *period* or *full stop* (.), *note of interrogation* (?), *note of exclamation* or *admiration* (!), *dash* (—), and *parenthesis* ( ).

We have now got considerably beyond the poor and paltry pointing of early days ; and this writer includes among his *points* signs which were not used before the invention of printing and which are not required for the strict *pointing* of a sentence but only for its rhetorical expression. This is a great step forward. And he rightly includes them ; but then it would seem that he wrongly excludes others : the *hyphen* (-), although for word-pointing and not sentence-pointing, should be noted ; and the *inverted commas* or *quotation marks* ( ‘ . . . ’ “ . . . ” ), mentioned by Mr. Mason.

Is there anything more ? Well, here we come to ground debatable. The exact definition of boundaries is a difficult thing both in science and statecraft : so too in literature : so too in the elementary business of this our Punctuation. Now I have maintained Punctuation to be a means of expression ; devices other than *points* or *stops* may rightly, in my opinion, be included. *Stichometry* I shall regard therefore as rightly covered by our term *Punctuation* : *points* may or may not be used—formerly they were, now they are not. But we have sundry signs in capitals and in spacing ; in the *new line* and in what the compositor calls *insetting*. These take the place of points and do their work ; they fairly belong to Punctuation. This would seem to be the opinion also of the writer in the *Popular Encyclopædia* :—

PUNCTUATION, the art of employing certain signs, by means of which the parts of a discourse are connected or separated, as the sense requires, and the elevation, depression or suspension of the voice indicated.

A  
Definition.

I should be very willing to accept this definition on the understanding that **paragraphing** and **verse-dividing** and consequent **large-lettering** are read into it; and that in giving to *sense* its logical demands and to the *voice* its rhetorical rights there is opening for tact and compromise.

But even now we have not quite finished. There is a good deal of very significant work done by division of subject

**More  
Debatable  
Ground.**

on the grand scale into chapter and section; by the employment of various kinds and sizes of type; by indexing with letters of the alphabet—English and Greek—and figures Roman and

figures Arabic; in short, by **much that belongs to the printer and compositor**, rather than to the man of letters.

**The Work  
of the  
Printer and  
Compositor.**

Now we will not despise the printer: have we not already seen that the Manutii may be considered the inventors of the modern system of stopping? Nor will we despise

the compositor: Dr. Johnson would beg his forgiveness as of a gentleman: "Mr. Compositor, I ask your pardon. Mr. Compositor, I ask your pardon, again and again." Admiring what they do, however, **we will not, as a rule, recognize this special work of theirs as Punctuation.**

I think we are now ready to formulate the following postulates:—

i. **LET IT BE GRANTED** that, in addition to its accepted pointing-function as just defined and explained, Punctuation

**Postulates :  
in further  
Expansion  
of our  
Definition.**

shall include the dividing of sentences and the setting-forth of verses and paragraphs with appropriate signs: and beyond this nothing more in strict definition.

ii. **LET IT BE GRANTED** that there is a somewhat indefinite border-land which can hardly be said to be named. The literary man has some right of entry and partial user, but the printer and the

compositor are lords over it. In dealing with a province of expression which shall do all that is necessarily left undone by uniformity of type and continuity of arrangement, this border-land must be to some extent explored and described.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ÆSTHETICS OF PUNCTUATION

THERE is yet another aspect of Punctuation which should not be overlooked : the æsthetic. I will say at once that this does not rank in importance with the logical and rhetorical, and I am not going to pretend that The Æsthetic Aspect. the literary man will have his choice affected by the grace of the comma, the charm of the semicolon or the majesty of the exclamation-mark : his appreciation of beauty will have full play in literature itself ; and the pointing will follow the style, not control it. But even here æsthetic perceptions will have some influence, though not much : a constant repetition of the same stop to the exclusion of others will not only probably fail to satisfy syntactical and rhetorical requirements, but will also jar and offend the eye. Take any page of an ordinary book with ordinary punctuation—not a common school text-book, for that will frequently have to set forth its information with special restraints of pointing : the stops in the third paragraph of the quotation from Mr. Mason on page 35, for example, are very ugly. But the casual page of our ordinary book with ordinary punctuation will not strike attention ; that,

however, is because the arrangement by which each stop does its fair share of duty satisfies our æsthetic perceptions : a constantly recurring example of the art which conceals art. A page full of colons would be somewhat offensive, and a page full of exclamation-marks would disgust anybody. If commas were put down by Act of Parliament to-morrow we could stumble along pretty well with the rest of the stops, using parenthesis-signs and dashes with great freedom. But a page full of dashes and brackets would positively hurt.

It is plain that our æsthetic preferences have really had something to say in this business.

By way of  
illustration.

Here are a few lines of print arranged after the style of the continuous writing of the early minuscule MSS. :—

inthatisletheyhaveacustombyallthecountrythatwhenthefatherisdead  
ofanymanandthesonlisttodogreatworshipto his fatherhesendeth toallhis  
friendsandtoallhiskinandforreligiousmenandpriestsandforminstrels  
alsogreatplentyandthenmenbearthedeadbodyuntoagreat hillwithgreat  
joyandsolemnity

Here is an arrangement of the same passage—from *The Marvellous Adventures of Sir John Maundeville, Kt.*—in which spaces are secured and capital letters very freely introduced :—

In that Isle they have a Custom by all the Country, that when the Father is dead of any Man, and the Son list to do great Worship to his Father, he sendeth to all his Friends and to all his Kin, and for religious Men and Priests, and for Minstrels also, great Plenty. And then Men bear the dead Body unto a great Hill with great Joy and Solemnity.

These capitals for every substantive have gone out of fashion. We should print it in this year of grace thus :—

In that isle they have a custom by all the country, that when the father is dead of any man, and the son list to do great worship to his father, he sendeth to all his friends and to all his kin, and for religious men and priests, and for minstrels also, great plenty. And then men bear the dead body unto a great hill with great joy and solemnity.

Of course the archaic expression seems almost to demand

the archaic large-letter system ; but I think there cannot be much doubt that æsthetic aspirations have had Eye-judg- some power in urging us to our existing con- ment in ventions : and that our modern fashion is in Punctuation. better taste than fashions past. It is, of course, true at the same time that syntax and rhetoric will be heard and the logical and rhetorical writer will each have his system of punctuation. Here is an illustration from Macaulay :—

They have talked of apprehensions and jealousies. What have apprehension and jealousy to do here ? Apprehension and jealousy are the feelings with which we regard future and uncertain evils. The evil which we are considering is neither future nor uncertain. A standing army exists. It is officered by Papists. We have no foreign enemy. There is no rebellion in the land.

This jerky punctuation is not attractive. Of course we must hold that Macaulay was a master and knew what he was doing : the urgency of high rhetoric was always before him. But this rhetoric would bear a little toning down. Another writer would possibly prefer the following ; where the syntax is modified—as he might think, for the better ; the rhetoric is softened—not for the worse ; and the tasteful eye is not startled by a succession of short sentences, capital letters and full-stops.

They have talked of apprehensions and jealousies ; what have apprehension and jealousy to do here ? Apprehension and jealousy are the feelings with which we regard future and uncertain evils, but the evil which we are considering is neither future nor uncertain : a standing army exists, and it is officered by Papists ; yet we have no foreign enemy, and there is no rebellion in the land.

We must not make too much of this. On the other hand, let us have ever so slight a regard to the æsthetics of punctuation, and we shall escape the error of throwing out a series of very short sentences, rounding off each with a full-stop and beginning each with a capital letter, and thinking we write like Macaulay. But when pure reason demands it, or strong feeling, throw the æstheticism of points to the winds.

No rule can profitably be given, but a principle can be formulated which may guide our practice :

Our Punctuation-system shall show freedom and variety, but with such restraints as to make it always subordinate to the urgency of intellectual and emotional expression, the eye at the same time not being aimlessly challenged by oddities and incongruities of points and signs.

But the printer must now be heard. He can assist the man of letters admirably by manifold variety of type. As a rule, this does not concern us very nearly, yet in regard to two important phases of book-making it does : these two phases may be represented by text-books and title-pages. Of course we can never get along without the printer ; he makes our manuscript enduring and multiplies readers : but that is taken for granted. I rather refer to his special assistance in type-variation and in trade-trickery to catch a reader's attention and to make thought abundantly clear. In the higher literary work, broadly speaking, the text throughout is of the same type : the literary man is arbiter, and gives final decision upon chapter and paragraph. In books of a special kind, however, though he still has the final word, he owes vast obligations to the printer—and the maker of type. Here is an example from Adams's " English Language " :—

Expression  
by Printer's  
Type.

By way of  
illustration.

## PART I. HISTORY OF THE LANGUAGE.

1. THE languages of the civilized world are divided into two great *families* ; the Semitic, and the Indo-European.

As the Semitic words in the English language are very few, it will be sufficient to observe that the Hebrew, Phœnician, Syriac, Chaldee, Arabic, Ethiopic and Coptic, are included in this family.



This is from Dr. Morris's *Elementary Lessons in Historical English Grammar* :—

## CHAPTER VII.

### Nouns.

#### I. GENDER.

79. **Gender** is a grammatical distinction and applies to *words* only. Sex is a natural distinction, and applies to *living objects*.

By personification we can speak of inanimate things as male or female, as

"The *Sun* in *his* glory, the *Moon* in *her* wane."

In the oldest English, *Sun* was treated as a feminine noun, and *Moon* as masculine. This usage was kept up as late as the fourteenth century, and later still in rare instances.

This from Nesfield's *Historical English and Derivation* :—

107. **Substitution of "his" for "s."**—The Genitive or Possessive suffix was sometimes spelt as *-is*. As this was sometimes written apart from the noun, it became confounded with *his*, through the uncertainty of initial "h" (§ 62).

Argal *his* brother.—LAYAMON, A.D. 1200.

Decius Cæsar *his* tyme.—TREVISA, A.D. 1380.

For Jesus Christ *his* sake.—*English Prayer-Book*.

*Note.*—It was once supposed that the *his* gave rise to the Possessive suffix *-es* or *'s*. This theory is, of course, ridiculous, for two reasons—(1) the Possessive suffix *s* gave rise to the Genitive pronoun *his*, and not *vice versa*; (2) the same suffix is used with Feminine nouns, as "*Jane's bonnet*," and with Plural nouns, "*men's work*." We could never have said "*Jane his bonnet*," or "*men his work*."

It may be thought that there are no canons or principles here, but there are : no special rules, but principles to apply.

Where there should be great variety of type—

Canons of or rather where variety of type is admissible—  
Type-variation. is usually in a class of writing where rhetoric is absent and logical demands must be met. The aims of the author in giving his reader sundry signs and marks other than *points* are,

- (a) To show clearly the relation, either in meaning or subordination, of the various sections and clauses and paragraphs.
- (b) To strike attention in whole and in detail, and make things easy for the student.
- (c) In carrying out these two purposes, to see that good taste is satisfied rather than shocked, yet to depress the rhetorical and æsthetic canons in favour of the logical.

It will be seen that in doing all this he is making use of more than a system of stops : and amongst other devices he makes use of that excellent trick of *insetting*.

“Insetting”      But we have not done with the printer and  
                          and  
 “Display.”      his colleague the compositor. In Heraldry,  
 Title-pages.      there is a word used to express the position of

any bird of prey when it is erect with its wings expanded : the bird is said to be *displayed*. In ordinary speech, *displayed* means, according to Dr. Ogilvie, “ unfolded ; opened ; spread ; expanded ; exhibited to view ; manifested.” Well, printers use this word : title-pages—and other things—are *displayed*. And now æsthetics come to the front and are in rivalry with logical claims ; overbear them indeed, and compel to an arrangement which secures lucidity and so satisfies logic, but at the same time removes the whole system of *points* from the page. Here we seem to have a simple trade-convention, imposing its commands in a new field of literature. But after all the printer at his best is an artist, and he must be let pretty well alone here. Even the type-maker has his artistic taste : some ornamental printing is very beautiful. With this the man of letters has nothing to do, except perhaps in the choice of what is presented to him. But he has to look to accuracy and lucidity of statement.

Once secure this, and he is content. But the printer desires this too, and will have it upon his title-page. Yet our stop-system has been devised, on its logical and rhetorical side both, to assist lucidity, and at the same time to save space. If it were always understood that a point might be omitted at the end of a line provided the text were suitably "displayed," no great harm would be done. And this is exactly the canon of procedure of the printer : on the side of logical expression he resorts to "display," and may drop his end-stops ; while æsthetic considerations are strong in the same direction. The over-hanging commas and semicolons and periods at the various line-ends afflict the artistic eye, and spoil spacings of even distance as between the left side and the right side of the page—afflicting the eye still more. The tasteful printer has his solution : **he cuts out the points.**

I will give a couple of instances ; but almost any title-page examined will—with some minor variations—show the same thing.

BOSWELL'S  
LIFE OF JOHNSON

EDITED BY  
AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOL. I

WESTMINSTER  
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND CO

1896

Not a single stop, except the full-stop indicating the abbreviation of the word *volume*, and the specially placed comma

or apostrophe in *Boswell's* : none at the ends of lines. The next is equally illuminating :—

THE  
ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA  
A  
DICTIONARY  
OF  
ARTS, SCIENCES, AND GENERAL LITERATURE  
NINTH EDITION  
VOLUME III

EDINBURGH : ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

MDCCCLXXV

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The ending is interesting. Note how the brackets close off the phrase properly from the æsthetic standpoint and so admit the full-stop:

This is printers' punctuation : for its special purposes correct enough, and to be let alone. For *points* which otherwise would be required are omitted only at the ends of lines ; the man of letters has therefore no objection, since the demands of logical expression are met and lucidity secured. And the general appearance is more tasteful : æsthetics have carried the day.

A Special  
Province.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PARAGRAPH AND THE PERIOD : APPROPRIATE SPACINGS AND SIGNS IN PROSE AND POETRY

A GREAT accomplishment and gift it is to know a thing in its very essentials and true nature : quoth Butler, in

*Hudibras,*  
**Knowledge**           He knew what's what, and that's as high  
    **of**                 As metaphysic wit can fly.  
**Essentials.**

Charles Lamb wrote of a merry actor of his day that " he knew a leg of mutton in its quiddity ; " my aim so far has been to reveal something better than this, and let the student see what Punctuation is " in its quiddity." Once this is known, rules can then be fewer and at the same time more certain and more useful ; while personal expression is secured without loss of lucidity.

Let us clear the way ; and finish off that part of our punctuation-practice which does not have very much to do with points : the tiniest of primers upon composition will say most of what there is to say, but unfortunately without reference to underlying principles. The student however will now be able to move easily, and is ready to have mastership over such preliminary and simple matters as **paragraphing** and **capital-lettering**.

The business of the writer is to make the reader understand. He should assume, without saying so, that every reader is dull or careless or both. We have seen that in old time the reader's task was unnecessarily hard: no wonder that the man of action would have none of it, and would neither read nor write. Nowadays, men and things are kindlier; everybody for instance knows the rule of paragraphing: *Begin a fresh subject with a fresh paragraph.* Which nevertheless is quite wrong: the element of truth in it possibly makes it all the more delusive. A fresh subject demands a fresh **book**, not a paragraph. But

**A Theory of Exposition:** given our subject fairly containable in one book, it will be found not only capable of subdivisions but clamorous therefor. Thought has to break its sequence at various stages, while cumbrous masses become manageable in smaller parcels. In such cases there will be **chapters**; but higher groupings may make **sections** and so may lower. In a given higher section a reader will

**The Book.**

**The Section and the Chapter.**

expect that the various chapters shall be logically connected with one another, while he will also expect a less decided but still coherent relation between section and section. Within a given chapter the differentiation of the smaller variations is not so striking: the smallest will want fresh **periods**, those of larger note fresh **paragraphs**, those of larger note still fresh—and subordinate—sections.

**The Paragraph and the Period.**

What then is our rule of procedure? I fear there is none; but rather a principle or canon of practice which resolves itself into mere good judgment as to where our subject has its natural divisions or where we can best make them. Where the writer desires to accentuate fresh thought, he will signify

this to the reader : if in a closely connected and immediately sequential series—he will want separate periods in the same paragraph ; a more decided variation will claim another paragraph. The change in each case will carry that meaning.

And think what **labour-saving machinery** all this is. The writer and the reader are in agreement without constant effort

**A Labour-saving Machinery.** on the writer's part to convey his ultimate meaning and every detail thereof to the reader, and corresponding constant effort on the reader's part to follow the deviations of the

writer and trace his every turn of thought. **Every full-stop and every capital letter and every inset first line are finger-posts ;** striking the reader's attention without diverting it, and at the same time giving information without possibility of misunderstanding : all making for speed and accuracy.

But it must not be thought that the period is in any sense fixed either in length or structure. This is not so ; it is

**The Period and the Full-stop.** under the control of the writer : the one primary condition being that it shall be intelligible and the one secondary condition that it shall be so marked off from its neighbours as to carry

the purpose of the writer in expressing the convenient units of his exposition. The grammar-book tells us that the sentence is a complete thought expressed in words : not a perfect truth, for it implies apparently that the thought is complete from something inherent in itself. I would like to turn it slightly, and adopt it for the *period* : which is a *complete unit of thought-expression properly separable from other units* ; it may consist of one or more sentences. It has no other actual and real structure or definition apart from the writer or speaker : much allowance must be made for personality. Milton wrote a period of over four hundred words ; more



modest men are content with a dozen or score or so. No. We make our own units of thought-expression according to

- (a) **our subject** : whether demanding statement broadly logical or touched largely with emotional or rhetorical expression ;
- (b) **our purposes** : various—to assist lucidity or strike attention or relieve tedium ;
- (c) **our idiosyncrasy** : the individual will have his preferences.

Our canon of procedure may now be given : **Harmonize these three variants—subject, purpose, personality. Then—begin each PERIOD with a capital and close it with a full-stop ; begin each PARAGRAPH with a fresh line and an inset first word.**

Canon of  
Procedure.

We have here touched questions of literary style. But rightly so : for, as already pointed out, punctuation follows the style. The expression of dialogue—or conversation—illustrates this ; and illustrates also a special application of period and paragraph. The shuttlecock-play of speech and speech, of question and answer, will control the paragraph. Peculiarities of stops I do not now explain or consider ; but clearly not only the stops, but the arrangement of period and paragraph follow the style : it is worthy of note that the ready grasp by the reader of the personality of the dialogue is so important a consideration, that **every speech shall be a paragraph**—allowing for the overhanging statement that the speaker spake it, and for a few adverbial and descriptive phrases. And this serves as a rule of procedure ; the sequence of thought and the degrees of sense-connection between period and period are left to take care of themselves. And this **prime canon of dialogue-expression** forces secondary speech quoted by one of the speakers into

**Punctuation  
follows  
Style.**

a subordinate position : *that* shall be imbedded within the speech-paragraph of one or other person of the dialogue. The functions of the period and paragraph are not overthrown, but to some extent are overborne by a higher necessity : the exposition of the dialogue. Thus, from the "*Pickwick Papers*" :—

"Strange practices these," said Mr. Pickwick, half speaking to himself and half addressing Sam.

"Not half so strange as a miraculous circumstance as happened to my own father at an election time, in this wery place, sir," replied Sam.

"What was that?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why, he drove a coach down here once," said Sam; "'lection time came on, and he was engaged by vun party to bring down woters from London. Night afore he was a-goin' to drive up, committee on t'other side sends for him quietly, and away he goes with the messenger, who shows him in; large room—lots of gen'l'm'n—heaps of papers, pens and ink, and all that 'ere. 'Ah, Mr. Weller,' says the gen'l'm'n in the chair, 'glad to see you, sir; how are you?'—'Wery well, thank'ee, sir,' says my father; 'I hope *you're* pretty middlin',' says he.—'Pretty well, thank'ee, sir,' says the gen'l'm'n; 'sit down, Mr. Weller—pray sit down, sir.' So my father sits down, and he and the gen'l'm'n looks wery hard at each other. 'You don't remember me?' says the gen'l'm'n.—'Can't say I do,' says my father. . . ."

And so on.

We have seen that the period-function is not measured by length of sentence. A single word may be rounded off by the

**Further Use** full-stop—or a single letter: the usual way of  
**of the** "pointing" abbreviations is by the full-stop.  
**Full-stop.** Thus, *A. B. Charles, Esq., M.A.* is punctuated

for shortenings, and may stand for *Alfred Bernard Charles, Esquire, Master of Arts*. A good dictionary will give a host of recognized abbreviations.

A final point, partly cautionary: perhaps a very small one. Several full-stops in series—an indefinite number

**A Line of** in a line—may mark a complete break in  
**Dots.** statement; generally something omitted in  
 quotation, as not necessary to the writer's  
 purpose. Thus, I may desire to quote *Tennyson* and

the *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table* respectively as follows :—

I hold it truth . . .

.....

That men may rise on stepping-stones

Of their dead selves to higher things.

"Oh, oh, oh!" cried the young fellows . . . "that is from one of your lectures."

"I know it," I replied. . . . "All lecturers, all professors, all schoolmasters, have ruts and grooves in their minds into which their conversation is perpetually sliding."

But these are false full-stops: mere dots masquerading as period-marks, and not compelling a next-following capital letter.

As the full-stop ends the period, so does the capital letter begin it. And as the period-length is shortened to a single

**Extended Use** word—or indeed to a single letter—with retention  
**of the** tion of the full-stop, so is the capital letter  
**Capital** retained: the single letter must be a capital.  
**Letter.** All this arises out of the distinctive function of  
 the capital letter,—it is significant of importance

by reason of its size, and eye-striking too. Hence it is rightly used to denote technical words; individual names and titles; all that goes as **proper adjective** or **proper substantive**: thus the capital is correctly used to introduce quotation or direct question—usually with the help of change of type or "inverted commas," the functions of which will be described later. Note the capital letters in the quotations from Bacon on page 62.

In this branch of our subject **poetry demands special consideration** as affording another—and more striking—

**The Period** instance of apparent variation from the normal.  
**and** Its regularities of capital and line and grouping  
**Paragraph** of lines seem exceptional. In part they are  
**in Poetry.** exceptional, but only because we are dealing  
 with **rhythmic expression**; the broadest

principles of punctuation hold good. The complete unit of sense-expression, *the period*, will still have its initial capital and its final full-stop. But correspondent with the period is the complete unit of rhythmic expression—

**The Verse.** *the verse* ; which has its own requirements, and in word and line-arrangement will dominate sense: for the musical lilt of the words has to be regarded and noted quite apart from their significance. This rhythmic movement works across the sense or meaning in varying irregularities and degrees of independence, yet always has to be immediately significant to the reader. **Hence, a fresh line for a fresh verse ; with an initial capital—** both for discrimination and æsthetics' sake.

The period, however, is hardly known in poetry by name ; nor that bundle of periods, the paragraph. The student will know that not only is the rhythmic molecule—

**The Stanza.** or *verse*—made up of distinct rhythmic atoms— or *feet*, but combinations of verses make up *stanzas*. The stanza again, as with the verse, must be made immediately apparent to the reader: thus, in the various metres known to prosody, there will be insetting of initial words, or variations of alignment in regular repetition, for the signification of types of verse ; and—since the resource of fresh line is no longer at disposal—a separation of stanza from stanza by a wider space. This space, again, is a convention, and has æstheticism in it: a marginal sign, for example, might have been used ; but things have grown up otherwise. The paragraph—as controlled by meaning—is then

- (a) Made to conform to the stanza ; or
- (b) Ignored ; or, in those types of poetry where stanzas are absent,
- (c) Indicated by fresh line with insetting, or by variation of alignment.

With due regard to sense-expression, then, as entwined in the rhythmic expression but not coincident with it,

i. For every fresh verse begin a fresh line, and with a capital letter.

ii. Adopt variations of alignment for variations of verse-length in the stanza.

iii. Distinguish stanzas by regular and significant spacing.

Canon of  
Procedure  
in Poetry.

## CHAPTER IX

### APPROPRIATE VARIATIONS OF TEXT, TYPE AND SIGNS

To return to prose—and the general question. With the period and paragraph, as contained in this chapter, our devices of arrangement are not exhausted.

**Lucidity** Everything for Lucidity. Bacon in his twelfth always. Essay quotes a “trivial grammar-school text” :—“question was asked of Demosthenes,

*What was the chief part of an orator?* he answered, *Action : What next?* *Action : What next again?* *Action.*” I would take this manneristic repetition of Demosthenes, but with a different application : *What is the first excellence of the written or printed text?* *Lucidity.* *And the second?* *And third?* *Lucidity.* And this lucidity shall be interpreted in reference not only to the meaning of words in their logical and syntactical import, but to the fine modifications of the

**Devices for** orator and the man of feeling. The reader  
**Lucid** shall be assisted by every possible—or conve-  
**Setting-forth** nient—trick of arrangement. I will not at-  
**of Details.** tempt to exhaust all variations, but take one  
or two examples only : their meaning once  
understood, the rest is easy.



i. THE CAPITAL LETTER, THE SPACE, THE NEW LINE—all for lucidity.

- But with varying particular use ; according as logical and rhetorical meaning, or the personality of dialogue, or the rhythm of verse and stanza must have expression. This we have seen already.
- (a) The Capital Letter.
- (b) Changes of Type.

ii. CHANGES OF TYPE.

a. *For grades of subordination.*

1. *Intellectual or logical*, as in ordinary exposition. The examples already given on pages 49 and 50 will serve for illustration.

2. *Rhetorical : e.g. :—*

If I were an American, as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country, I never would lay down my arms ;—NEVER, NEVER, NEVER!

- b. *For simple emphasis.* Italic type in the midst of the usual Roman is a common device.

1. *Intellectual or logical.* Foreign or technical words, words in high relief or quoted words, with or without quotation points—including book-titles ; words that it is desired to lift out of the text in any way : *e.g. :—*

a. He acted *ultra vires*.

b. *Cephalalgia* is a medical term denoting a severe form of headache.

c. It will be observed that Johnson at all times made the just distinction between doctrines *contrary* to reason and doctrines *above* reason.

d. He was never a whit abashed, but said "*If the hill will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the hill.*"

It is greater blasphemy to personate God, and bring Him in saying, *I will descend and be like the prince of darkness.*

e. The very ingenious *Essay on the Character of Falstaff.*

f. Boswell, *lend* me sixpence—not to be repaid.

Our Authorized Version of the Bible affords an illustration of the purely logical use of italic type: italicized words imply throughout that our language demands them to complete the sense of the Hebrew or Greek original, in which these words are not found. This function of italics is not general: an omitted word thus supplied would usually appear within brackets.

## 2. *Rhetorical* :—

I will *not* go.

Then in his pupil's face he dashed—*an empty purse*.

- (c) Significant Figures and Letters and Conventional Signs.
- iii. SIGNIFICANT FIGURES AND LETTERS AND CONVENTIONAL SIGNS.
- a. *For logical discrimination*, co-operating with change of type.

This chapter throughout gives a pretty complete illustration, and has been arranged with that end in view. The Roman numerals here denote equality of rank in the first position of subordination, the small Roman letters an equality in the second position, and so forth; all combined with *insetting* and varied *alignment*: some lettering and figuring and inseting and type-changing being necessary, but the *what* and the *how much* being left to personal idiosyncrasy and æsthetics.

## b. *For illustrative comments and facts*.

A good deal that throws light upon the text would only confuse if incorporated in the text. Hence *notes* are required. And here we have a mixed multitude: large letters and little letters, capital letters and small letters, heavy letters and light letters, Roman letters and italic letters, significant signs and signs meaningless except for convention.

They remind of the rats of Hamelin :—

You heard as if an army muttered ;  
 And the muttering grew to a grumbling ;  
 And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling ;  
 And out of the houses rats came tumbling.  
 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,  
 Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,  
 Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,  
 Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,  
 Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,  
 Families by tens and dozens.

And our system of signs, like Sam Weller's knowledge of London, is " extensive and peculiar." For instance :—

1. *All the letters of the alphabet* are at our disposal : for note, reference and cross-reference. The " margins " of Bible-texts will give illustrations.
2. *All the figures Arabic and numerals Roman* as far as we like to go or as needs must.
3. *The whole army of abbreviations* ; such as
  - a. N.B., MS., *e.g.*, *i.e.*, *id. ib.*, p., pp., v., vv., q.v., cf., etc., &c. All with meaning and from the Latin. A good dictionary and book of grammar should be consulted : I merely hint at what the writer has at choice to assist full and rapid expression.
  - b. Other signs cabalistic and meaningless in themselves ; devices of scribes and printers : the *asterisk* (\*), the *dagger* (†), and a large remainder.

It will be understood that the variations of type and the use of significant letters and figures as here described are permissive rather than compulsory: you *may* do this, but you

*need not.* But if you will convey your thoughts with clear expression, *something equivalent you must do* : the particular devices employed depending on subject and personality.

Also it will be understood that **very much of this is not punctuation** ; but that is of no importance : you may call it

<b>Printers'</b>	by any name or no name. But these manifold
<b>work, rather</b>	devices are instrumental for perfect expression ;
<b>than</b>	for giving an exactitude of meaning which
<b>Punctuation.</b>	would not be possible otherwise. So much is
	at our command when we work hand in hand
	with the printer and compositor.

Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more,  
cried Othello : so says the impatient student. He need  
not be anxious : he shall soon have mastery over them.

## CHAPTER X

### SUBDIVISIONS OF THE PERIOD : THE MINOR STOPS

**The Divided Period.** THE subdivisions of the **period** have now to be considered, themselves varying from a single word—or even a single letter—to anything short of the whole structure which is

ordinarily rounded off by the full-stop. The typical points within the period are the **comma**, the **semicolon** and the **colon**—arranged in ascending order of abruptness of separation or degree of logical or rhetorical distance : the comma marking the lightest distinction and the semicolon being less disjunctive than the colon—

**The Typical Stops :**  
**comma,**  
**semicolon,**  
**colon.**

though not measuring half its force, nor any exactly adjusted fraction. And as our punctuation-materials grow more complicated, so is there greater opportunity for individual expression in shaping our meaning according to logical and rhetorical requirements : and with greater opportunity greater variety and a more advanced workmanship.

And here we have to confess that there are **Complexities** difficulties. “ God bless your riverence,” cried **in Practice.** Pat as an anxious penitent, “ I can manage the Docthrine aisy enough : it’s thim Commandments that bothers me.” This may very possibly be true

of our punctuation. The doctrine is easy enough : by this time the student knows most of the theory, and the rest will not prove troublesome. But "thim commandments" may yet bother him : it is hard to evolve good guiding rules, safe for all occasions and easy to keep.

Hamlet . . . Look you, these are the stops.

Guildestern. But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony. I have not the skill.

And the student agrees : but all shall come right in the end.

I have in mind that fine example of high sagacity, Captain Jack Bunsby, in *Dombey and Son*. His friend and admirer, Captain Edward Cuttle, spoke of him with reverent regard : "If it would console Sol Gills to have the opinion of a seafaring man as has got a mind equal to any undertaking that he puts it alongside of, and as was all but smashed in his 'prentice-ship, and of which the name is Bunsby, that 'ere man shall give him such an opinion in his own parlour as'll stun him—ah ! as much as if he'd gone and knocked his head again a door !" But when this oracle gave voice it was only to utter generalities, and avoid just those particular decisions which his hearers wanted : "The bearings of this observation lays in the application on it." Here is wisdom. And he kept his reputation for an almost superhuman intelligence by avoiding any such practical directions : "That ain't no part of my duty." These wise people generally leave you in this fashion.

We will see what Mr. Mason has to say, for he will at least have set down nothing hastily : he is of the best.

As it is impossible to lay down perfectly exact rules for the introduction of pauses in speaking, so it will be found that in many cases the best writers are not agreed as to the use of stops in writing. All that can be done is to lay down the most general principles.

**The Application of Principles.**  
**Ambiguities and Hesitations.**



Unfortunately Mr. Mason fails to do that very thing. **Principles must have a rational explanation**, and will very likely, in their application, lead us to trace and adopt those regularities of practice which we call *rules*; but to write down a few rules of procedure and call them *principles* will not make them such. And to begin the enunciation of a series of rules by saying that there are none is not hopeful: perhaps we may do better in detail. Let us see: speaking of the colon, Mr. Mason says:—

But in similar cases many writers only use the semicolon; no exact rule can be given.

Even as to whether there shall be a minor stop or not in sundry circumstances, there is nothing certain:

It is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules.

Hence their statement is adverbially qualified by *commonly*, *usually*, *frequently* and *generally*; and when these adverbs disappear there is still less of imperative force:—

The following directions may be of service . . .

The following rules may be observed . . .

But an adverbial clause need not be preceded . . .

All this reminds rather of the delightful scene between Dr. Johnson and his dear friend Bennet Langton. The pious old dictionary-maker desired his pious friend to "tell him sincerely in what he thought his life was faulty." Apparently the Doctor expected something definite, and possibly a few rules of moral procedure would have been welcome. Langton, however, with a kind concern, wrote out a few texts in praise of Christian charity, and gave them to Johnson: who expressed his thanks earnestly, but presently roared out, "What is your drift, sir?" The anxious student will not be affronted, as Johnson was; yet,—reading rules put forward haltingly, and with much qualification—may in some perplexity and in all humility say, "*beg your pardon, sir; but what is your drift?*"

Yet Mr. Mason is substantially right : there are no exact rules in punctuation. But he is right only so long as we

**No Exact  
Objective  
Rules in  
Detail.**

neglect a true theory and attempt to get rules for what is incapable of regularity. Where he errs and others with him—I hope I speak modestly—is in trying to formulate empirical rules without relation to their fundamental science. We cannot wonder, then, that such rules are either incorrect or inadequate : they are not founded upon the bed-rock of punctuation in its philosophy,—in its very quiddity. We have seen that this involves much more than an arbitrary convention upon the use of stops. If every stop had only to express an understandable meaning to be gathered from the grammar of words, we could have an exact system of rules ; and, if it were worth while, it could be made very elaborate and comprehensive. But individuality has to be expressed ; and the grammar-sense of words must be pregnant with emotional and rhetorical meaning. Adequate and useful rules, in the ordinary acceptation, thus become almost impossible ; and, where not altogether impossible, treacherous.

So we come to the same conclusion as Mr. Mason ; but with a very different outlook and by a very different road. We shall not be able to formulate exact and minute rules

**Stop-value  
and Stop-  
function  
Again.**

so long as these rules are expected as *objective* only—*i.e.*, as distinct from the personality and individual expression of the writer—and so long as they are expected as logical or syntactical only—*i.e.*, as distinct from his emotional or rhetorical purpose. **Once recognise principles—**which are of prime importance—and rules are possible, and easy too. But then they take on a different form : rules in the usual acceptation being still of no great utility or else impossible. They become rather a statement of the

*functions or values of the several stops* and the conventions under which they are accepted and employed; the writer being always at liberty—and, indeed, compelled if he has anything worth saying—to exercise an individual and more or less *apparently exceptional choice* within that range.

I hope this has been shown fully. The exposition of the *paragraph*, the *period*, the *capital letter* and the *full-stop* is a partial illustration; and the same method has now to be applied to the subordinate divisions of the period and their appropriate punctuation.

Jack Bunsby is right: "the bearings of the observation lays in the application on it." But he is wrong when he says, "that ain't no part of my duty." At any rate the practical teacher may not imitate him; and the whole trend of this little book is to elucidate principles so fully as to make their application easy and at the same time to guide and assist the student in this very practical procedure.

We have seen that the *period* is rounded off by the full-stop; and that the stops of less separative significance are at our disposal for its subdivisions. Now there is absolutely no rule—apart from the purpose of the writer and the emotional effect intended—which can declare that the comma or the semicolon or the colon shall divide the period or its parts.

The *colon* is the stop of abrupt and distinct

(a) The separation within the period; with—as a further  
Colon. particular function—the direction of attention to  
the limb which it introduces, and which will be

found to have a special reference—by way of illustration or otherwise—to the preceding limb or to the whole period: *i.e.*, it does not merely separate sentences of equal importance and of collateral\* function, but very distinctly unifies them

---

\* We frequently find sentences side by side, which have a connection with each other as regards their sense and use, but have no *grammatical* link of connection between them (that is, no conjunction, relative pronoun, or relative adverb). The complex idea that such sentences

in a general logical and rhetorical effect. If the writer desires this effect, he will use the colon ; and this quite independently of the objective structure of his period, except that therein collateral divisions are existent or admissible. The *semicolon*

*is less forceful in its separative effect, but at the same time does not well express this forward-regarding attitude towards the next limb of the period which is typical of the colon.* This last

function, however, being not of the very essence of the colon—though best expressed by it and always to be suspected—the colon and semicolon are objectively interchangeable ; but the writer will use the semicolon when he desires to express a less abrupt and forcible separative effect than he would indicate by a colon. For the sake of lucidity he must note, however, that where collateral main divisions have collateral subdivisions within themselves, these must be discriminated by correspondent variations of colon and semicolon. The

*comma is the stop of least separative function.*

(c) The **Comma.** It is used when the writer desires some pause, but very little ; or when, perforce, the cumbrous syntax must be graphically indicated in the

first degree, or parallel limbs of the period shall have a slight suggestion of independence.

It will be understood that from the objective or sentence-structure point of view the colon, the semicolon and the comma are equally at our choice in the subdivisions of the

suggest to the mind is the same as if they were co-ordinate clauses coupled by conjunctions. For example—"I came. I saw. I conquered." "Fear God. Honour the king."

"The way was long, the wind was cold ;  
The minstrel was infirm and old."

"So he spoke, so I replied." "This is foolish, that is wise." "I was robbed of all my money ; for that reason I was unable to proceed."  
"I believed, therefore have I spoken." "He is virtuous ; consequently he is happy."

Such sentences as those placed side by side in the above examples may be called *collateral sentences*.—MASON, § 449.

period ; but not equally at our choice with any change of the idea and purpose of our expression. The canon of procedure is this :

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Canon of<br/>Procedure<br/>for Colon,<br/>Semicolon,<br/>and Comma.</p> | <p>i. Consider what degree of relative connection and separation respectively is required, and what rhetorical attitude it is intended to express.</p> <p>ii. Choose then the colon, semicolon and comma according to the particular function and value of each ; bearing in mind that comma must rank with comma, semicolon with semicolon, colon with colon, as respectively of equal force.</p> |
|--|--|

The purpose of the writer in the expression of himself and his subject includes the effect he would produce upon the reader's *attention*. A few stops, and those of the milder kind, will tend to an even flow of equable thought and feeling ; the more abrupt stops—once their function is well understood—will startle the attention and excite emotion. And apart from this result of their value-expression, the very fact of the use of such sentence-marking stops as the colon and semicolon at shorter intervals will of itself suggest by force of novelty or oddity something logically separative and attention-calling ; for the use of comma, semicolon and colon where something less is necessary or usual, lifts the marked portion into logical and rhetorical importance and upon the wave-crest of attention : while the inverse process will tend towards a lower level of interest ; and to something less of force, and possibly of lucidity.

These principles of ours make for exactitude and simplicity, and yet for variety and freedom in the employment of our machinery of stops : for almost every sentence we have **Punctuation by Special**

The Reader's  
Attention  
to be  
Challenged.

Freedom and  
Variety in  
the Practical  
Application  
of our  
Principles.

Licence, and all within the law. A few illustrations will further elucidate; and first let us take the sentences quoted at the foot of page 72:—

	I came. I saw. I conquered.
By way of illustration.	All periods. But
	I came : I saw : I conquered*

is clearly as good; and possibly better, as expressing a certain unity within the period in addition to the separation of the contributory sentences.

I came; I saw; I conquered slightly tones down the separative effect, but is equally good punctuation, viewed syntactically.

I came, I saw, I conquered is weaker rhetorically, but correct enough. It is stop-value and function that has to be considered, and the master in literature will use all for expression.

Fear God. Honour the king.
Fear God : honour the king.
Fear God ; honour the king.
Fear God, honour the king.

These four variations are all objectively correct, but have not all the same expression-force.

So he spoke, so I replied  
is no better—nor perhaps worse—than

So he spoke : so I replied.

It is to this freedom of choice—but always under principles of expression as now explained—that I wish the student everywhere to have regard. He will write

This is foolish, that is wise

or

This is foolish : that is wise

or

This is foolish ; that is wise

---

\* It will be seen that the full-stop is omitted for the better fitting of the quotation within the sentence. So in other instances.



according to the full logical and rhetorical meaning he himself has and wishes to convey ; but, as expressive of this varying meaning, all forms are correct. These alternatives following are again quite as good objectively as those given on page 72 :—

I was robbed of all my money : for that reason I was unable to proceed.

I believed : therefore have I spoken.

He is virtuous : consequently he is happy.

Another instance. Macaulay writes—as quoted by Mr. Mason, and as we might expect from his vigorous and rhetorical intent—

The Chief must be Colonel : his uncle or his brother must be Major : the tacksmen must be the Captains.

Another of calmer mood, or perhaps not knowing the secret of rhetoric in stops or not caring for it, would write

The Chief must be Colonel, his uncle or his brother must be Major, the tacksmen must be the Captains.

Or with even flow of thought, he would insert the conjunction before the final clause and write

The Chief must be Colonel, his uncle or his brother must be Major and the tacksmen must be the Captains.

On the other hand a fierce rhetorician would possibly separate the whole into three periods :—

The Chief must be Colonel. His uncle or his brother must be Major. The tacksmen must be the Captains.

But note now that we have in the main been discussing

**Further  
Analysis :  
the Comma  
as the Stop  
of least  
Separative  
Function.**

subdivisions with a thought-meaning of their own : not mere words. Qualifying words and phrases have, however, their logical and rhetorical significance : this function the comma, as compared with the semicolon and colon, has pretty much all to itself. A similar line of procedure to that formulated already will be correct :—

i. Consider whether pause or distinction is required by logical or rhetorical expression. If yes,

ii. Use the comma ; unless, exceptionally,  
 Canons. very strong effect is desired for a special purpose or is demanded by the word-expression in consonance with the general tone of the context.

This may appear to compel us to qualify our former conclusion that the comma, semicolon and colon are equally at choice, apart from expression-purpose ; not quite so, apparently, when words or mere word-combinations are concerned. Yet this is really only a proof of our earlier contention :—

**The Comma is the stop for slender distinctions.**

It may be added that

The Comma is apt to be employed too freely. Remember its slight distinctive force ; and in practice have some inclination towards using a semicolon instead when  
 A Cautionary Canon. a point is judged necessary, and towards omitting it when a point is not clearly demanded.

And this prepares us for a last word on the comma. One of its functions is to mark elision—of word or letter ; thus omit “ and ” in a bundle of words or clauses  
 Elision. and the comma appears. It is therefore correct in the usual enumeration of persons and things, and in a string of collateral phrases or clauses—the last in each case being connected with its predecessor conjunctively by “ and,” disjunctively by “ or ”—to use the comma where the conjunction is omitted, and to omit it when the conjunction is expressed. Thus :—

John and James and Mary.  
 John, James and Mary.

From Mr. Mason :—

He lost lands, money, reputation and friends.

He wrote his exercises neatly, quickly and correctly.

Add further :—

He begged that inquiry might be made into his statements, that his protestations might be accepted and the testimony of his friends regarded.

Of course the insertion of a comma as well as a conjunction would be permissible on our own canons : but for special distinction's sake only.

This elision-function is seen in the *apostrophe* : which is *a comma inserted to mark the absence of one or more letters*.

It is then placed on the top-level of the letters ;

thus :—*couldn't* for *could not*, *ne'er* for *never*,  
 The Apostrophe. *'twas* for *it was*. It is the natural sign of the  
*possessive case*, where the vowel of an old  
 Genitive case is displaced ; as in *Christ's sake*.

## CHAPTER XI

### MODIFICATIONS OF THE PERIOD : PARENTHESIS AND QUOTATION

THE comma marks the smaller distinctions. But these may be comparatively numerous in the same complex sentence; frequent commas may then hinder rather than assist the sense: for each comma must be regarded as of equal force with every other, presumably denoting collateral clauses or phrases—or at least those of corresponding rank and importance. Our series of commas will not then effectively distinguish degrees of subordination or qualification: commas amongst colons and semicolons will suggest specifically what commas amongst commas will not. In an articulated sentence—

**Ambiguity  
with many  
Commas.**

Which, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along,—the separate phrases may be properly marked by commas; yet one of them may have very distinct qualifying or illustrative or—in general terms—“parenthetical” force. How shall this be distinguished? The answer is complex.

- i. The sentence may be recast, possibly becoming double in the process.
- ii. A re-arrangement of stops may be made, with possible omission of redundant commas.

- iii. The thing may be left as it is, without variation of stop; but with hope of the reader's ingenuity.
- iv. The "parenthetic" clause may be separated from its predecessor and successor by dashes; or
- v. It may be "bracketed."

As the student will now expect, these resources, though all adequate, are not all equally applicable upon all occasions.

The sentence that I have just written adopts the

By way of  
illustration.

third choice in the preceding list: the words "though all adequate" are parenthetic; but

so mildly parenthetic, that the true meaning

would be injured by bracket or dash. The same holds good of the phrase "like a wounded snake" in the line quoted from Pope. But in the sentence in which the quotation occurs, as also in the one I am now writing—both made purposely somewhat complicated for the sake of illustration—the parenthesis is indicated by dashes. And rightly: first because of the necessity of clear distinction, and next because of the marked parenthetic character of the words thus hedged by dashes. Turn to page 35 for the original of the following further illustrations:—

- i. In speaking, the words of a sentence are not uttered consecutively without any break; and this is especially true of the complex sentence.
- ii. In speaking the words of a sentence, especially if it be a complex one, are not uttered consecutively without any break.
- iii. In speaking, the words of a sentence, especially if it be a complex one, are not uttered consecutively without any break.
- iv. In speaking, the words of a sentence—especially if it be a complex one—are not uttered consecutively without any break.
- v. In speaking, the words of a sentence (especially if it be a complex one) are not uttered consecutively without any break.

Of these, the first is the writer's trick, not the stop-maker's. The second is clearly inadmissible: the sense is obscured and the expression spoilt. Mr. Mason would vote for the third, leaving things as they are. I prefer the fourth, as properly expressing a very distinct qualifying effect of the

clause concerned. The fifth exaggerates this effect, and is also old-fashioned.

And this last remark is cautionary. Brackets must clearly be used when the whole period or paragraph is parenthetical : the paragraph is seldom so, but the period often. But the present-day æsthetics of punctuation will avoid brackets in the minor divisions of a period as far as may be : a pair of dashes or a pair of commas will take their place. And the fact that brackets are growing archaic will accentuate their parenthetical effect when used. And so,

For expressing this parenthetical detachment,

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Canon for<br>Parenthesis. | i. For the paragraph or period, make use of a pair of brackets and end with the usual full-stop outside the second bracket.<br><br>ii. For divisions less than the period, make use of a pair of commas, dashes or brackets in rising order of detachment and falling order of frequency ; but use a pair of dashes freely where a multiplicity of commas may tend to obscurity. |
|---------------------------|--|

Brackets have more than one form :—( ), [ ], { }. The first is the most common. A parenthesis within a parenthesis is correctly represented by the first form within the second ; it is very rarely that more is required, except in the involvements of mathematics. But two parentheses may conceivably fall within a third, then use an additional form, only taking care that each limb of the series of brackets has its correct and corresponding fellow.

The  
Bracket.

But a single word can be parenthetical as well as a phrase : then in varying degrees of effect, and exactly as with parenthesis of many words, use

- i. No stop, because of very slight detachment ; or
- ii. A pair of commas, dashes or brackets.



In this respect brackets are often proper; and are used to enclose figures—and letters used numeratively—in tabulated lists and classified paragraphs. This last use is absolutely discretionary.

Brackets hunt in couples. Their primary function is the expression of parenthesis: aloofness and subordination combined. And though in pairs dashes take

**The Dash.** the place of brackets, their primary function is to express detachment: a breach of continuity within the period. Thus the single dash is used: and especially

- i. Where the expression of detachment or separation is abrupt: it is the spasmodic stop—the stop of jerks—as here.\*
- ii. Where a profusion of colons and semicolons is tending to lack of lucidity: your dash is an excellent substitute.

The dash also has the same forward-regarding function as the colon, each being used alone in this respect, and also both together. Manifold instances will occur to the student: *e.g.* :—as follows :—hence :—thus :—with something to follow in each case.

But from another point of view this detachment-function is conjunctive: the partial separation of what otherwise

\* Mr. Jingle's conversation gives us an example:

"It must be rather a warm pursuit in such a climate," observed Mr. Pickwick.

"Warm!—red hot—scorching—glowing. Played a match once—single wicket—friend the Colonel—Sir Thomas Blazo—who should get the greatest number of runs. Won the toss—first innings—seven o'clock a.m.—six natives to look out—went in; kept in—heat intense—natives all fainted—taken away—fresh half-dozen ordered—fainted also—Blazo bowling—supported by two natives—couldn't bowl me out—fainted too—cleared away the Colonel—wouldn't give in—faithful attendant—Quanko Samba—last man left—sun so hot, bat in blisters, ball scorched brown—five hundred and seventy runs—rather exhausted—Quanko mustered up last remaining strength—bowled me out—had a bath, and went out to dinner."

would be of one piece is but the partial connection of what otherwise would be in separate segments.

**A**  
**Conjunctive**  
**Function :**  
**The Hyphen.**

Historically, all punctuation is separative; logically, it is just as naturally connective. And here with the dash we have an interesting instance; for in a shortened form it is used for the manufacture of compound words: our *hyphen* is the *dash diminutive*. It will connect words which usually would be separate; but it will connect them with a special meaning-function, e.g.:—*warming-pan*, *reading-book*. The hyphen marks a half-way stage between complete separation and complete fusion; and this will give the student's canon of procedure.

On a point of style, it may be noted that a little freedom in the use of home-made compounds is permitted. Some comic and burlesque writers love lengthy ones: writes Edgar Wallace,

One of the struck-pa-with-a-roll-of-music-and-enlisted sort of fellows.\*

With a what-can-I-do-for-you-my-poor-child sort of smile.\*

But very serious people like the Germans love them too. So also Carlyle, following German models:—

The child's bright fancy loved to linger on those never-to-be-forgotten people, by whom her brother's Poem had been led into her sight and understanding.†

Beautiful Nanette: with such a softly-glowing soul, and such a brief tragically-beautiful little life.†

The student will understand that I do not recommend this sort of thing, or pronounce it either good or evil. But if it is done at all, it has to be done with the hyphen.

And as the hyphen is used for compounding words, so also it is used for dividing them into syllables: as seen in every spelling-book. In ordinary text too; for the æsthetics of printing will have a neat arrangement and a uniformity of

line-length: this sometimes requires that the word shall be divided at the end of a line; where the hyphen is again significant, but used only at proper syllable-joints. The hyphen marks nothing lower in analysis than the syllable, as a rule. But exceptionally, it will divide letters:—

“We go upon the practical mode of teaching, Nickleby—the regular education system. C-l-e-a-n, clean, verb active, to make bright, to scour. W-i-n, win, d-e-r, der, winder, a casement. When the boy knows this out of book, he goes and does it. . . .” “B-o-t, bot, t-i-n, tin, bottin, n-e-y, ney, bottinney, noun substantive, a knowledge of plants. When he has learned that bottinney means a knowledge of plants, he goes and knows 'em.”\*

We are now at the end of what may be called the punctuation of direct statement, as typified by ordinary narrative and the indicative mood. But it is often necessary to

**The Punc-  
tuation of  
Quotations :  
Inverted  
Commas.**

incorporate the remarks of others: these must be differentiated from the text, and the device of *quotation marks* is employed. They are placed above the upper letter-level; the first pair turned upside down, the second in their natural position, and both pairs turned inwards facing each other; it is from the last circumstance probably that they are known as *inverted commas*: at any rate one pair only can be called *inverted* in the sense of being upside down. This by the way, to check a common mistake amongst young teachers. Their employment is very regular, their significance is well

understood, and there is no difficulty in their manipulation: but it should be noted that secondary quotations—quotations imbedded in quotations—are indicated by *inverted single commas*. This is the usual convention, and is practically without exception in ordinary dialogue; as an example, the quotation from the *Pickwick Papers* on page 58 will serve. Compare, from *Dombey and Son*:—

---

\**Nicholas Nickleby.*

"Why, yes, yes—some of our lost ships, freighted with gold, have come home, truly," returns old Sol, laughing. "Small craft, Mr. Toots, but serviceable to my boy!"

"Exactly so," says Mr. Toots. "You'll never find my wife wrong. 'Here he is,' says that most remarkable woman, 'so situated—and what follows? What follows?' observed Mrs. Toots. Now pray remark, Captain Gills and Mr. Sols, the depth of my wife's penetration. 'Why that, under the very eye of Mr. Dombey, there is a foundation going on, upon which a—an edifice'—that was Mrs. Toots's word," says Mr. Toots exultingly—" 'is gradually rising, perhaps to equal, perhaps excel, that of which he was once the head, and the small beginnings of which (a common fault, but a bad one. Mrs. Toots said) escaped his memory. Thus,' said my wife, 'from his daughter, after all, another Dombey and Son will ascend'—no, 'rise'—that was Mrs. Toots's word—'triumphant.'"

But it is quite as correct to employ the single commas as principals and use doubles for the secondary duty; and where dialogue is not at issue this

- i. Single.
- ii. Double.

course is sometimes preferred: some people dislike the multiplication of many marks.

Thus:—

Johnson having argued for some time with a pertinacious gentleman, his opponent, who had talked in a very puzzling manner, happened to say, 'I don't understand, you, sir'; upon which Johnson observed, 'Sir, I have found you an argument, but I am not obliged to find you an understanding.\*'

But Boswell, quoting an informant, writes:—

'He pressed me to study Dr. Clarke, and to read his *Sermons*. I asked him why he pressed Dr. Clarke, an Arian. "Because (said he) he is fullest on the *propitiatory sacrifice*."'

Exact phrases or words of any kind—such, for example, as book-titles—may be enclosed in quotation marks; the aim being always to suggest graphically and immediately that the words so distinguished are another's and not the writer's. But the italic type is here of service and very generally adopted. There are plenty of examples in these pages.

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\* Mr. Birrell's edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, vol. vi., p. 148. *Ibid.*, p. 249.

## CHAPTER XII

### VARIATION FROM DIRECT STATEMENT : QUESTION AND EXCLAMATION

Our sentences are not always simply declaratory. They  
Something may take the form of a question ; or be so  
besides the expressed as to be significant of emotional  
Declaratory. feeling.

The Note of Interrogation. The *question* is marked by its own appropriate sign ; and under ordinary circumstances there is not much doubt or difficulty in its use. It is very commonly associated with *quotation marks*\*— dialogue or general conversation being so largely made up of questions ; and is then placed just within the second pair of quotation-commas : that is, the mark of question simply takes the place of the period or other stop of less division. Here are a few questions from George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* :—

(a) Question-  
Form and  
Question-  
Meaning.

" Why, what's up now, Tom ? " said his father. . . .

" Father," said Tom . . . " do you know exactly how much money there is in the tin box ? " . . .

" Are you quite sure that's the sum, father ? " said Tom. . . .

" How should I make a mistake ? " said his father sharply.

---

\* It is understood that *quotation marks* are not an absolute essential in all cases of quoted speech.

And the question is not limited to the direct question form :  
a particular voice-inflection may make entirely

- (b) **Question-** interrogatory what otherwise in speech would  
**Meaning.** be declaratory, and this is indicated in print  
and writing by the appropriate sign :—

... And I suppose you had no great difficulty—you did not find him very unwilling to accept your proposal? '\*

'You did, then,' said Elinor, a little softened, 'believe yourself at one time attached to her? '\*

- (c) **Question-** On the other hand, many a question-form  
**Form.** is a rhetorical trick, and used for brightness  
and animation's sake :—

'What is Miss Morton to us? Who knows, or who cares, for her? '\*

**The** 'But have I ever known it? Well may it be  
**Rhetorical** doubted; for, had I really loved, could I have sacrificed  
**Question.** my feelings to vanity, to avarice? or, what is more,  
could I have sacrificed hers? '\*

No answer is expected to such remarks as these, but the question-stop is still used.

**The** But sometimes when no answer is expected  
**Imperative** no point of interrogation is expected either.  
**Question.** The sweeter politenesses of life will occasionally  
soften an instruction or command by the use  
of a civil question-form :—

Will you please be good enough to send the parcel at your convenience.

This is equivalent to

Please be good enough to send the parcel at your convenience.

It must be confessed, however, that there is no very certain agreement here: the choice of the right stop will depend on

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\* *Sense and Sensibility.*

considerations of stop-value and stop-function—and the personal equation.

You will make me a waistcoat.

This “doth something smack” of the imperative; and the tailor may reply, “I’m blessed if I do.”

You will make me a waistcoat?

A distinct interrogation, inviting the answer. “Certainly, sir.”

Will you make me a waistcoat.

A polite direction: a social sweetness, concealing an order. There is no doubt in the writer’s mind, nor does he desire an answer: if he gets one, it is something about his esteemed command or favour—not his esteemed question.

Will you make me a waistcoat?

A reply is expected, or should be: “With much pleasure, sir.”

This is not entirely fanciful; in the case of this stop—as of all others—I would direct the student’s attention to **PUNCTUATION AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSION**: and our canon of procedure may be thus formulated:—

i. Determine the tone of the word, phrase or sentence.

If interrogative, use the interrogative mark: if not, not.

Canons of  
Procedure  
for Question-  
mark.

ii. In cases of doubt, follow the verbal form; it cannot be altogether incorrect to use the question-stop for a question-form, a declaratory stop for a declaratory form and an emotional stop for an emotional

form.\*

iii. Give stop-function and stop-value free play, with reasonable individual freedom too.

---

\* Which will be explained shortly.



It has already been pointed out that the mark of question may stand in place of stops of smaller division-value than the period: this will guide the student in the employment of the capital letter.

Look at the period, or portion thereof, from the declaratory side; close the question with its appropriate sign, and begin the next sentence—question or not—with a capital letter if another period, and with a small letter if not.

We may put this in another way:—

Use a capital or small letter according as the preceding question-mark takes the place of a full-stop or stop of less division-value.

By way of illustration. The following may serve as illustrations: all are from *Pickwick Papers*:—

- i. **Capitals used.** "How came I here? What was I doing? Where was I brought from?"
- "Soda water, sir? Yes, sir."
- ii. **Capitals not used.** "What's the matter now?" said Wardle. "What's the matter with the dogs' legs?" whispered Mr. Winkle. "Take anything now, sir?" said the waiter, lighting the candle in desperation at Mr. Pickwick's silence. "Tea or coffee, sir? dinner, sir?"

A question may imply doubt, or challenge. A special case is the bracketed question-mark in the body of a sentence, to call abruptly into question a particular word or phrase which it immediately follows:—

This honest (?) friend of yours has bolted.

The detachment-effect of the bracket should be noted at the same time.

Amongst our stops or points, there is but one The Note of to express emotion: the emotions are many, Exclamation. but their punctuation-sign is one—the *note of exclamation*. It is to be used

Canon of  
Procedure  
for the  
Exclamation-  
mark.

- i. Wherever surprise, wonder, horror or other feeling is clearly expressed by the words used—either in sense or sentence-form. The appropriate sentence-form is the **EXCLAMATORY**; the appropriate word is the **INTERJECTION**.

- (a) The Stop. ii. Wherever in phrase and sentence-form, usually simply indicative or declaratory, it is desired to challenge the attention of the reader; or suggest horror, surprise or other emotion on the part of the writer. It well expresses disgust and sarcasm.

The following are examples, in addition to the whole crowd of *interjections* :—

- i. 'How good! how kind! and he is gone.'\*

How jocund did they drive their team afield!

How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!†

- ii. 'God has given you health and strength: instead of which you go about stealing ducks!'

'This is a pretty fine thing!'

A good deal must again be left to the tact and discretion of the writer: he should be the best judge of what he intends to express. A caution may not be out of place

Cautionary. —special restraint must be exercised in the employment of this *exclamation-mark*; it is to be used, as a rule, with frugality.

A capital letter immediately follows it—or not—exactly as in the case of the *question-mark*; that is, according as it has been emotionally used in place of the full-stop or stop of less division-value. Compare :—

(b) The Capital Letter.

- i. Capitals used. "There you are again! You'd come round to the same thing if one talked to you from Saturday night till Saturday morning."‡

\* *In Memoriam*.

† Gray's *Elegy*.

‡ *Silas Marner*.

"Hey, by jingo, there's the young Squire leading off now, wi' Miss Nancy for partners! There's a lass for you!"\*

ii. **Capitals not used.** "Eh? What! not safe?" said Mr. Tupman, in a tone of great alarm.

"How good! how kind! and he is gone."

"Oh, what a dark, ugly place!" said Eppie.\*

"Dear heart!" said Silas.\*

There may sometimes be rivalry between the *exclamation-mark* and the *mark of question*: the writer must decide whether the emotion is strong enough—either in the word-sense or in his own expression-purpose—to allow or control the use of the note of exclamation.

**The Question and the Exclamation in Rivalry.**

'Could she not see that we wanted her gone!'

From *Pickwick* once more:—

"What do *I* mean!" retorted Sam; "come, sir, this is rayther too rich, as the young lady said wen she remonstrated with the pastry-cook arter he'd sold her a pork-pie as had got nothin' but fat inside. What do *I* mean! Well, that ain't a bad 'un, that ain't."

With allowance for change of stop in accordance with the expression of feeling or the expression of inquiry, it is interesting to note how exactly parallel is the use of the exclamation-mark with the use of the question-mark. And indeed we have now found that where emotion and inquiry meet the stops are practically interchangeable. The same is true of the *bracketed* exclamation and inquiry signs: the interjectional use of the note of interrogation is paralleled by the interrogative use of the note of interjection. Our former illustration on page 88 might well be put thus:—

**The Bracketed Exclamation-mark.**

This honest (!) friend of yours has bolted.

And now our discussion is ended: there is nothing left that imperatively demands direction. We have done better than Jack Bunsby, for we have explained the application of our principles: and in sufficient detail to

\* *Silas Marner.*

† *Sense and Sensibility*

justify the claim that this little book is a complete manual. Not that every case of practice has been noted, any more than a treatise on arithmetic will record and

**Farewell.** solve every problem. That is not our aim. We

have desired to set forth the *Science and Art of the Putting-in of Stops*, that the student may punctuate correctly by reason of his knowledge of true theory and of the stop-value and function of his several materials. The great multitude of rules floating loose through a number of text-books we have broadly ignored, since we regard them in the mass as either faulty or valueless. We conceive the whole body of stops to be instruments to assist expression—the expression of *somebody* and of *something*. Each stop has its proper worth and utility, largely dependent upon an accepted convention; but the Master will always exercise choice, taking one or the other according to *his* purpose and *its* nature—and consequent fitness. And all this has taken a long time to expound, and we have been a long time in coming to an end.

This by way of final explanation—and a meek apology for being like Charles II, “such an unconscionable time in dying.”



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